

Recorded Jazz in the 20th Century:

A (Haphazard and Woefully Incomplete) Consumer Guide

by Tom Hull

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Introduction

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Acknowledgments

Some of this is already written above: Robert Christgau, Chuck Eddy, Rob Harvilla, Michael Tatum. Add a blanket thanks to all of the many publicists and musicians who sent me CDs. End with Laura Tillem, of course.

Individuals

Ahmed Abdul-Malik

Ahmed Abdul-Malik: *Jazz Sahara* (1958, OJC) Originally Sam Gill, an American but with roots in Sudan, he played bass with Monk but mostly plays oud on this date. Middle-eastern rhythm and tone, topped with the irrepressible Johnny Griffin on tenor sax. An interesting piece of hybrid music. [+]

John Abercrombie

John Abercrombie: *Animato* (1989, ECM -90) Mild mannered guitar record, with Vince Mendoza writing most of the pieces and playing synthesizer, while Jon Christensen adds some percussion. [+]

John Abercrombie/Jarek Smietana: *Speak Easy* (1999, PAO) Smietana is a Polish jazz guitarist, a leader of several groups and co-leader of the Namyslowski-Smietana Quartet (which may not mean much to you, but I consider Zbigniew Namyslowski's *Winobranie* to be one of the outstanding avant-garde jazz albums of the '70s). Abercrombie, of course, is a household name by now. The two guitar line-up (plus bass and drums) works like a charm here: both have sensible things to say, and they fill in nicely around each other. [+]

Rabih Abou-Khalil

Rabih Abou-Khalil: *Tarab* (1992, Enja) Oud, with Selim Kumar (nay), Glen Moore (bass), Nabil Khaiat (frame drum), Ramesh Shotham (South Indian drums). His records are exotic enough that they stand out as a unique category, and so consistent that they sort of blend into each other. You can think of the oud as a guitar -- it can play lead lines, but more often than not it slides back into the rhythm. The nay (as it's spelled here; ney is the spelling I most often run across) is somewhere between an end-blown flute and a clarinet -- a frontline instrument, but not an especially strong one. Very appealing record, although much of it runs together. One cut that stands out is "Orange Fields," but its successor hangs in there too. The final cut, "Arabian Waltz," climaxes. [9]

Rabih Abou-Khalil: *The Sultan's Picnic* (1994, Enja) A larger group this time: Howard Levy (harmonica), Kenny Wheeler (trumpet, flugelhorn), Charlie Mariano (alto sax), Michel Godard (tuba, serpent), Steve Swallow (bass), Mark Nauseef (drums), Milton Cardona (conga), Nabil Khaiat (frame drums). The extra musicians can make this more complex, but they don't change the fundamental equations. The more western instrumentation has mixed results -- the big loss is the subtlety of the ney. But Mariano gets in some good solos, and I never complain about tubas. Overall, a shade less interesting than *Tarab* or *Blue Camel*, but that's a rather marginal distinction. [+]

Muhai Richard Abrams

Muhai Richard Abrams: *Afrisong* (1975, Why Not -09) Chicago pianist, a founder and leading light of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, better known as AACM, where creative was avant-garde but imbued with the sense of advancing into new terrain; solo piano, always difficult

to pull off but his rhythm and enhancement work on both counts. [9]

Cannonball Adderley

Cannonball Adderley With Bill Evans: *Know What I Mean?* (1961, Riverside/OJC -11) Starts with solo piano, then Adderley's alto sax enters in a warm rush; with Percy Heath and Connie Kay, who (unlike Paul Motian) wouldn't dream of tripping the leaders up: the result is that the oft-introspective pianist flows exuberantly -- needless to say, so does Cannonball. [9]

The Cannonball Adderley Sextet: *In New York* (1962, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) A bop band that swings effortlessly because they so enjoy r&b groove, but their slickness leaves a greasy aftertaste, which isn't helped by tenor sax man Yusuf Lateef's forays into exotica; a live throwaway, hard to take seriously, impossible to dislike. [5]

Cannonball Adderley Quintet: *Cannonball in Japan* (1966, Capitol) With brother Nat (cornet), Joe Zawinul (piano), Victor Gaskin (bass), Roy McCurdy (drums). Loose, luscious, soulful hard bop in six generous servings. Scott Yanow panned this on AMG saying "strangely uninspired . . . just going through the motions. Perhaps they were already tired of this material or maybe it was jet lag." Huh? Nothing special, sure, but I find it hard to complain about such a good natured groove. [+]

Nat Adderley

Nat Adderley: *Work Song* (1960, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) Cannonball's little brother plays a lean, unpolished cornet, backed by a group that straddles Bobby Timmons' funk-groove piano and Wes Montgomery's slickened blues guitar; the irresistibly catchy title cut makes this a minor hard bop classic. [9]

Nat Adderley: *That's Right!* (1960, Riverside/OJC) The group here backs Nat with five saxophones (Yusef Lateef also brought his flute and oboe along), but (aside from Lateef's atmospheric) none distinguish themselves: the whole thing is awash in section play and harmonic overtones, which distract from Nat's own fine playing. Busy, busy. [5]

Nat Adderley: *Little Big Horn* (1963, Riverside/OJC) Co-credited to the Junior Mance Trio and guest guitarists Kenny Burrell and Jim Hall (who play on alternate tracks, not together): pretty easy to put together a first class group with so much talent around. The flavor is hard bop, but the pianist and the guitarists like to show off their considerable chops, and Nat can take a slow one with Jim Hall (the slower and prettier of the guitarists) and wax eloquent. [9]

Airto

Airto: *Fingers* (1973, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira and wife Flora Purim cashed in on the 1960s bossa nova craze, then hooked up with Chick Corea's Return to Forever fusion band and fell into CTI's lap; this cooks all their affections down to an unrecognizable mish mash, clunky when he tries to sing, otherwise slick or airy or incoherent. [4]

Toshiko Akiyoshi

Toshiko Akiyoshi: *Finesse* (1978, Concord) Rather straightforward trio with mainstreamers Monty Budwig (bass) and Jake Hanna (drums). Ranges from "Mr. Jelly Lord" to Edvard Grieg's "Solveig's Song," sounding much the same -- her Bud Powell influence is definitely there, but the rhythm section would rather swing, and she accommodates them. [5]

Howard Alden

The Howard Alden Trio: *Your Story -- The Music of Bill Evans* (1994, Concord) I don't have any sense for the Bill Evans songbook -- clearly he was a major figure, but it's never been all that clear to me just what he did or why it matters, and I certainly couldn't recognize any of these eleven Evans compositions. Still, Alden's guitar has much of the charm and intricacy of Evans' piano, and "special guest" Frank West warms the trio up with tenor sax and flute. Alden's easy swing has always made him one of the best of the Concord guitarists, but this has an engaging intimacy and good cheer that sets it apart. [9]

The Howard Alden-Dan Barrett Quintet: *Live in '95* (1995, Arbors -04) The occasional vocals break the flow without much payoff, but the swinging instrumentals are delightful, with Chuck Wilson's alto sax or clarinet joining Barrett's trombone and Alden's silk smooth guitar holding it all together. [+]

Monty Alexander

Monty Alexander: *Ivory and Steel* (1980, Concord) The steel drum complements piano much like a vibraphone does, and gives it a further lift on the faster calypsos here. Piano is fast and sure. Not sure that this is a great idea, but at least it's an enjoyable oddity. [+]

Rashied Ali

Rashied Ali/Frank Lowe: *Duo Exchange* (1972, Knitting Factory) Short (28:39), which is a plus in music this intense. I developed quite a distaste for Ali during Coltrane's furthest-out phase, but he is rarely short of brilliant here -- so good that it makes sense to concentrate on the drums and just let Lowe's saxophone cacophony float by as background. Which the bare duo format lets you do. Not that Lowe can or should be ignored -- he more than carries his end of the deal. [9]

Rashied Ali & Arthur Rhames: *The Dynamic Duo: Remember Trane and Bird* (1981, Ayler -2CD -04) John Coltrane died too soon for Ali, the drummer who opened up the final chapter of the Saint's life; Rhames died too soon also, which is one reason you've never heard of the nonpareil street musician, but not before shaking the rafters on these previously unheard tapes. [+]

Jan Allan

Jan Allan: *70* (1968-69, Phono Suecia) Granted a crown rating by the <i>Penguin Guide</i>, damn near impossible to find (got mine mail order from Sweden, and even though that sounds obvious it wasn't that easy), and just plain baffling. Overarranged, I'd say. Lots of little intricate touches -- sharp piano from Bobo Stenson and Nils Lindberg, delicate bass from Palle Danielsson, thoughtful saxophone from Bernt Rosengren and Arne Domnerus, even a little trumpet from Allan -- yet it never

totally hangs together. [+]

Henry "Red" Allen

The Henry Allen Collection, Vol. 6 (1941-46, Collector's Classics -97) Seven cuts from a 1941 group with J.C. Higginbotham and Edmond Hall; seven more from a 1944 group with Higginbotham and Don Stovall; eight more from a similar 1946 group. Allen's heyday was c. 1930-32, when he was second only to Louis Armstrong at bringing New Orleans trumpet into the swing age. He continued to play in that vein, Dixieland-tinged swing, the rest of his life (d. 1967), often spectacularly, as on 1957's *World on a String*. Still, these sessions can be viewed as transitional. In 1932 Allen was state of the art; by 1957 he was a glorious antique. In the 1940's he was still dogging the changing times, with occasional ventures into bebop (cf. "Dark Eyes") and more frequently into gutbucket r&b and jukebox jive. Allen sings on 8 of these 22 cuts, including most of the 1946 cuts. Allen himself is consistently superb; my only reservation is that the jive isn't funny enough, and the r&b isn't raw enough, or ripe enough, to compete with the standard-setters. [+]

Mose Allison

Mose Allison: *The Sage of Tipso* (1962-68, 32 Jazz -2CD) Four Atlantic albums on 2 CDs, this provides a broad swatch of Allison, including quite a bit of his piano as well as the vocals. One reason that I pulled this out was the notion that Willie Nelson might have more to do with someone like Allison than the usual country influences, but that doesn't hold a lot of water: although the voices aren't miles apart, Mose affects the hipster more, and tends to improvise (or at least modulate) in ways that recall people like Jimmy Scott, whereas Nelson's phrasing is much subtler. Good song: "Jus Like Livin" ("whatever happened to real life"). Possibly too much here, but second disc is better than the first, and the second half of that, the album *I've Been Doin' Some Thinkin'*, is the best part of that. Thinkin' is good. [+]

Herb Alpert

Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass: *The Lonely Bull* (1962, Shout! Factory -05) Nice packaging, the hit that launched a career full of fake Mexican instrumental fluff, predictable filler from "Desafinado" to "Tijuana Sauerkraut." [3]

Herb Alpert's Tijuana Brass: *South of the Border* (1964, Shout! Factory -05) A more consistent album, which means that the filler doesn't break down so bad, even when they do "Hello Dolly" and the Beatles; easy listening that's easy to listen to. [4]

Herb Alpert's Tijuana Brass: *Whipped Cream & Other Delights* (1965, Shout! Factory -05) An album of food songs, more famous for Dolores Erickson's cover pose 'neath a mountain of shaving cream than for the tune that got mashed up with Public Enemy for my favorite bootleg of 2003. [5]

Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass: *Lost Treasures* (1963-74, Shout! Factory) Of course, they're all fakes, mostly plastic and cheese puffs; they could have built a comedy album around such malaprops as "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head" and "Flowers on the Wall" and "Killing Me Softly," so feel free to laugh. [2]

Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass: *Sounds Like* (1967, Shout! Factory -05) With a couple of exceptions, this sticks to what they do best -- light, jaunty little instrumentals with some brass on top and a touch of that Tijuana beat; but when they stretch they're liable to get hurt. [4]

Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass: *Herb Alpert's Ninth* (1967, Shout! Factory -05) Cover pictures a smirking Beethoven, whose own "Ninth" proved to be somewhat more momentous; two minor hits, one from Holland-Dozier-Holland ("The Happening") more suited to Alpert than to the Supremes, a <i>Sgt. Pepper</i> cover, a comically inept stab at "Carmen." [3]

Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass: *The Beat of the Brass* (1968, Shout! Factory -05) Two vocal pieces this time, a #1 hit with the sweet but languid "This Guy's in Love With You," a big-time miss with "Talk to the Animals"; instrumentally, the usual stuff, leading off with a treacly "Monday, Monday," isn't even up to the usual standards. [1]

Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass: *Classics, Vol. 1* (1962-70, A&M -89) For me he came to the fore just last year, with the instrumental track wedded to a Public Enemy rap on *The Best Bootlegs in the World Ever*. So, yeah, that softened me up a bit, but this collection of mostly instrumental pop from his salad days is mostly listenable, sometimes enjoyable. A bit long, perhaps. [5]

Franco Ambrosetti

Franco Ambrosetti: *Gin and Pentatonic* (1983-85, Enja) This is the sort of thing that reminds me of the otherwise meaningless category "post-bop." With bop it shares the fast, showy horn runs (Ambrosetti plays trumpet), and it has much the same rhythmic nuance, but it seems sort of gussied up, like a night at the symphony. Not the sort of thing I like, yet when Buster Williams takes a bass solo, and Kenny Kirkland chimes in on piano (on the title cut), my ears perk up. [5]

Albert Ammons

Albert Ammons & Meade Lux Lewis: *The First Day* (1939, Blue Note -92) The label became synonymous with hard bop in the mid-1950s, but started here, on Jan. 6, 1939, with Alfred Lion recording two boogie woogie piano giants; mostly solos -- nine by Ammons, eight by Lewis -- and some are tentative, but they give a good accounting of the pianists' power and twinkle, and they team up for two blitzkrieg duets. [8]

Albert Ammons: *Boogie Woogie Stomp* (1938-39, Delmark -98) Ammons gets the big print on the cover -- presumably the Chicago man on the Chicago label -- but the fine print credits Meade Lux Lewis (6 cuts) and Pete Johnson (2); mostly live, with the attendant patter a distraction, but the piano sparkles. [8]

Albert Ammons/Henry Brown/Meade Lux Lewis/"Cripple" Clarence Lofton/Pete Johnson/Speckled Red: *Boogie Woogie Kings* (1938-71, Delmark -09) Your basic boogie woogie piano sampler with some vocals; Lofton's six cuts are the oldest; Red, with four cuts including a previously unreleased (and relatively mild) "Dirty Dozens," is the most recent; Lewis gets three sharply played cuts, plus one with the Ammons-Johnson-Lewis triumvirate. [7]

Gene Ammons

Gene Ammons: *Bossa Nova* (1962, Prestige/OJC -89) With Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd running amok, this was the fad du jour. Here Bucky Pizzarelli and Kenny Burrell do the guitar, Hank Jones plays piano, and bass-drums-bongo are also present. Short (34:31), pleasant, nice guitar, and of course Ammons' marvelous tone and straightforward swing. Nothing to not like, but how far can you go with it? [5]

Gene Ammons: *A Stranger in Town* (1961-70, Prestige -02) Pieced together from several sessions -- an Oliver Nelson big band from 1961 and smaller groups later -- separated by a long stint in prison, the only thing that holds this pastiche together is the remarkably uniform beauty of Ammons' saxophone voice. [9]

Gene Ammons: *Fine and Mellow* (1972, Prestige -03) This starts off with a splash of Ed Bogas strings, sticky if not downright icky, but when Ammons' saxophone rises above the goo, his tone is so pure and robust that the strings have no recourse but to fall in line, in awe. The strings depart after three tracks, leaving us with what Ammons did over and over again in his career: funky sax-capped organ grinds. There is nothing far-out or even particularly innovative in Ammons' playing. He was strictly a melody guy -- his sax runs rarely surprised you because they always made so much sense melodically. He could work up a sweat with his vamps, and he could bleed a ballad, but his calling card was his tone -- what tenor saxophone *should* sound like. He recorded scads of albums, most barely distinguishable. Fantasy has been reissuing him steadily since the advent of the CD era, and I figured from what I'd heard that he must have declined after 1960 -- drugs hurt, compounded by time in prison -- but these late sessions are as exquisite as anything he ever did. He died two years later, shy of his 50th birthday. If you gotta die young, at least it's nice to leave a beautiful memory. [10]

Gene Ammons & Sonny Stitt: *God Bless Jug and Sonny* (1973, Prestige -01) Tenor jousting is a venerable American sport, and Ammons-Stitt matchups go back as far as 1950, but this one is far and away their best, perhaps because they seem more intent on having a good time than on drawing blood. [9]

Gene Ammons & Sonny Stitt: *Left Bank Encores* (1973, Prestige -02) More from the same gig, stretching out a bit so you can enjoy Cedar Walton's piano, with Etta Jones contributing two vocals that further break up the main point here: marathon saxophone jousts. [+]

Franck Amsallem

Franck Amsallem: *Another Time* (1990, A -97) Algerian-born French pianist, in a trio with Gary Peacock (bass) and Bill Stewart (drums). Originally released as *Out a Day*, his first. I've played this a bunch and I'm having a lot of trouble getting a handle on it. I don't dislike it, and I'm hard pressed to pick faults with it, but I expect a record this well regarded, with this good a rhythm section, to make me pay attention, and this doesn't do that. [5]

Arild Andersen

Arild Andersen: *Green in Blue: Early Quartets* (1975-78, ECM 3CD -10) Norwegian bassist, one of several now-prominent musicians spawned by George Russell and Don Cherry during their late 1960s

move to Scandinavia. Has a dozen-plus albums under his own name, the first three returned to print here. These are all sax-piano-bass-drums quartets, with flush flowing rhythms that highlight the leader's bass. Pål Thowsen is on drums on all three. The debut album, *Clouds in My Head*, features Kurt Riisnaes on tenor sax, soprano sax, and flute, with Jon Balke on piano. Balke would have been close to 20 at the time, but he already has a tough approach, and makes a much stronger impression than Lars Jansson, who replaced him on the other two albums. Riisnaes is superb throughout, but was also replaced on the later albums, *Shimri* and *Green Shading Into Blue*, by Juhani Aaltonen, who is riveting on tenor sax but plays a lot more flute, an instrument that he gives a dry, cerebral tone -- fascinating as such things go, but it's still flute, and it shifts the records toward the airy side -- *Shimri* has a slight edge of joyous discovery, but the two are very closely matched. [8]

Arild Andersen: *Rarum XIX: Selected Recordings* (1975-99, ECM -04) Jazz in Scandinavia took a fateful turn when George Russell arrived, putting aside earlier bebop influences to evolve into something more avant yet distinctively nordic. The most directly influenced were Jan Garbarek (saxophones), Terje Rypdal (guitar), Arild Andersen (bass) and Jon Christensen (drums), and to a huge extent Manfred Eicher built ECM -- easily the most prodigious European jazz label of the last 30 years -- and its trademark freeze-dried sound around their work. Andersen has recorded over a dozen albums under his own name or that of his late '80s band Masqualero, which featured pianist Jon Balke and introduced trumpeter Nils Petter Molvaer. The *Rarum* series often runs into trouble trying to mix and match pieces that don't fit well, but by focusing sharply on the bass, this one manages the shifts between quiet and dynamic, simple and complex. [9]

Fred Anderson

Fred Anderson/DKV Trio (1996, Okkadisk -97) Anderson is a Chicago jazz legend, a founder of the AACM, but aside from a couple of albums cut c. 1980 he didn't start getting his name up front until he hit 65 -- although he's recorded a dozen or so albums in the decade since. This one pairs him with Chicago's younger generation of avant-jazzists: DKV stands for Hamid Drake (drums), Kent Kessler (bass), and Ken Vandermark (reeds). I haven't heard a lot of Anderson, but I've generally had a lot of trouble with him in the past -- he blows ugly, and it's hard to make rhyme or reason out of his work. Vandermark, of course, can blow pretty ugly too, and that's where this session heads out quickly on "Planet E" -- my guess is that that one is mostly Anderson's fault. But the Drake/Kessler rhythm section is a marvel, and over the course the reeds settle down a bit, with a stretch of cooing overtones at one place. And at least one piece of saxophone nastiness does make some sense to me -- I credit Vandermark with that one, although there's no notes here to disillusion or enlighten me. [6]

Fred Anderson/Hamid Drake/"Kidd" Jordan/William Parker: *2 Days in April* (1999, Eremita -2CD -00) This is the sort of thing that people who think they hate avant-garde jazz actually hate: two saxophones, riffing aimlessly, with no beat, no melody, no harmony, tone not far removed from plug ugly. Anderson is a venerable figure from Drake's home base in Chicago; Jordan is a little known player from New Orleans, who has cut several albums with Parker. Crank it up and some features start to emerge: first that the drummer is spectacular, and then that the bass player isn't chopped liver either. Also the horns start to separate into lines that start to make a little sense. But if you're not committed, don't bother. [4]

Ray Anderson

BassDrumBone [Ray Anderson/Mark Helias/Gerry Hemingway]: *Wooferto* (1987, Soul Note) On the other hand, this trio with a notable avant-garde rhythm duo gets nowhere at all: the 'bone just toot-toots its notes, the spaces in the rhythm breaking any chance at flow. The same trio met up ten years hence and produced a great album, but this isn't it. [4]

Ray Anderson: *Blues Bred in the Bone* (1988, Enja) This is a relatively early, relatively simple showcase for Anderson's trombone work, where the blues pieces set up the 'bone's growl. [+]

Ray Anderson Alligatory Band: *Heads and Tales* (1995, Enja) I love Anderson's postmodern trombone, and I dig the concept behind the Alligatory Band, which is to raise a ruckus. Problem is, this album doesn't really rise to the occasion until the finale, a piece called "Drink and Blather," where Anderson resorts to his skewed hipster singing, adumbrating a set of variations on "life is better this way." Sure is. [+]

Ray Anderson Pocket Jazz Band: *Where Home Is* (1998, Enja -99) The trombonist's brass band, with Matt Perine's sousaphone handling the bass, Lew Soloff's trumpet hitting the high notes, and drummer Bobby Previte hitting everything else; bridging avant and antique, especially when they reach back for Joplin ("The Pineapple Rag") and Ellington ("The Mooche"). [9]

Reid Anderson

Reid Anderson: *Abolish Bad Architecture* (1999, Fresh Sound New Talent) The Bad Plus bass player, working in a quartet with Bad Plus pianist Ethan Iverson, tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, and Jeff Ballard on drums. It's a very solid group. This is more borderline than *The Vastness of Space*. The latter has a lot of fresh meat rhythmically, whereas this is more conventional. Iverson and the bassist are superb. Turner is a bit of a question: a terrific player in the post-Coltrane thread that dominates jazz saxophone these days, he makes a strong impression at times, but doesn't do anything particularly new. Still, I've played this well over a dozen times, and it's a rock solid slice of contemporary post-everything jazz. Hard to complain about that. [9]

Peter Appleyard

Peter Appleyard and the Jazz Giants: *The Lost Sessions 1974* (1974, Linus -12) Previously unissued session with a little-known English vibraphonist and a group who justify their billing as Jazz Giants: Bobby Hackett (cornet), Zoot Sims (tenor sax), Urbie Green (trombone), Hank Jones (piano), Slam Stewart (bass), and Mel Lewis (drums). Lost Sims albums are always welcome, Jones sparkles, and the vibes add some twinkle. Over-padded with 25 minutes of outtakes at the end, the chatter less a problem than the quick-stop fragments. [7]

Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong/King Oliver (1923-24, Milestone -92) This anthology combines the 1923 Creole Jazz Band recordings with the 1924 Red Onion Jazz Babies cuts, leading up to the famous "Cake Walking Babies from Home." The King Oliver sessions always seemed like an historic curiosity to me: one might mine them for hints, but the real progression comes later, in the Hot Fives and Sevens. [9]

Louis Armstrong and the All Stars: *Satchmo at Symphony Hall [65th Anniversary]: The Complete Performances* (1947, Hip-O Select -2CD -12) Complete comes to 119:37, a full 49:36 more than the 1996 Decca CD, which shaved a few seconds off everything, and a lot more by discarding feature spots for the All Stars -- from Jack Teagarden down to Arvell Shaw's bass solo, but mostly Velma Middleton; restoring all that reduces the real star's prominence, but also makes this show less like every other show, and more of a special event. [9]

Louis Armstrong and the All Stars: *Satchmo at Pasadena* (1951, Verve -09) One complaint is that Satch spreads center stage around too much, but Barney Bigard, Earl Hines, and Jack Teagarden earn their keep and their billing, and the sketch with Velma Middleton on "Baby It's Cold Outside" is an all-time classic; the only other problem is that it ends too soon, which is why I recommend the 4-CD version: *The California Concerts*, sadly out of print. [9]

Louis Armstrong and the All Stars: *New Orleans Nights* (1950-54, Verve -08) A short compilation of six good ole good 'uns, mostly from two-part 78s, some with original All Stars, some with latter day stand-ins; most of these warhorses have been done and done, but only "New Orleans Function" sounds forced, or maybe I just mean schematic. [9]

Louis Armstrong: *Live at the 1958 Monterey Jazz Festival* (1958, MJF -07) Well, if you've heard one Armstrong live set, you'll probably want to hear them all; post-All Stars, so there's less reason to share the stage; late enough that those "good ole good 'uns" include "Mack the Knife." [+]

Louis Armstrong & Friends: *What a Wonderful Christmas* (1950-66, Hip-O -97) Having included a couple tolerable Xmas albums, I recalled I hadn't heard this one, graded A by Christgau; the six cuts Armstrong sings on really are that special, although it should be noted that only "Winter Wonderland" is a standard and Gordon Jenkins comes close to spoiling it; the other eight are by friends very loosely speaking -- Dinah Washington, Mel Torme, Peggy Lee, Lionel Hampton, Eartha Kitt, Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, and Louis Jordan -- and none of them transcend their material even if some handle it exceptionally well. [8]

Louis Armstrong: *The Best of Louis Armstrong [20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection]* (1949-67, MCA -99) Not even close, but this is representative of the first Armstrong I first fell in love with, the elder showman with a gravelly voice he could contort to sing anything, if not perfectly so uniquely no one else could touch it, and that trumpet, it could cut through any fog and pin you to your seat; nowadays I wonder if young people think it was him doing the favor for Bing Crosby on "Gone Fishin'." [10]

The Essential Louis Armstrong (1925-67, Columbia/Legacy -2CD -04) Scott Yanow panned Legacy's previous Armstrong compilation, the 4CD *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, arguing that anyone who inadvertently purchased the box would be throwing their money away, because they'd wind up wanting to buy all of the source discs that it was selected from. That's a pretty hardcore argument. Even if one were to concede that there's nothing that should be missed on Columbia's 7CD early Armstrong series -- which is truer than you can imagine -- the box did a brilliant job sorting out Armstrong's more marginal period work with King Oliver, Fletcher Henderson, and scads of blues singers (collected on 6CD by Affinity). However, limiting Armstrong to two CDs, covering the same early period plus another thirty-some years, will definitely leave you wanting more. We can argue about omissions, but it's hard to begrudge anything that was selected. Notably, Legacy reached out to UMG for the 1936 "Shadrack" and the 1967 "What a Wonderful World," and to BMG for the 1947 "Rockin' Chair," filling

in holes in Columbia's own catalog. A nice gift for the young person you know who don't know squat. Get *The Complete Hot Five and Hot Seven Recordings* (4CD, on Columbia/Legacy, or cheaper on JSP) and *The California Concerts* (4CD, on Decca) for yourself. And don't expect to be satiated. Yanow was being foolish, but not stupid. [10]

Mulatu Astatke

Mulatu Astatke: *New York-Addis-London: The Story of Ethio Jazz 1965-1975* (1965-75, Strut -09) Broader than the overlapping Addis-only *Éthiopiennes 4* collection, mostly with swipes at Latin jazz, but the globetrotting Ethiopian percussionist never found a groove he couldn't incorporate, or spice up with the flavor of his homeland. [9]

Michaël Attias

Michaël Attias: *Credo* (1999, Clean Feed -05) Brief bio: born Israel 1968, Moroccan parents, grew up in France, played violin as a child before taking up alto sax, moved to New York in 1994, studied with Lee Konitz and Anthony Braxton. Attias has been a steady sideman downtown, composes, released his "first" album early in 2005, a fine trio called *Renku* with John Hebert and Satoshi Takeishi. Now comes an earlier set, a complex series of trio, quartet and sextet pieces -- where the later album is elegant in its simplicity, this one is as tangled as his roots. He explains these pieces referring to Israel, France and Morocco, but "Hot Mountain Song"'s fiddle reminds me more of the Ozarks, and the Torah-based "Berechit" sounds to me, and perhaps to bassist Chris Lightcap, like old-time Mingus. [7]

Roy Ayers

Roy Ayers: *Ubiquity* (1971, Verve -09) The namesake album for the group vibraphonist Ayers ran for the next decade; light funk, a couple of indifferent vocals, the catchy "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" reduced to pure cutesiness and probably better off for it. [4]

Roy Ayers Ubiquity: *He's Coming* (1971, Verve -09) A more consistent album with a stronger band -- Sonny Fortune, Harry Whitaker, John Williams, Billy Cobham -- not that it makes much difference; the funk grooves remind me of disco, but rarely take off; the vibes help out, especially on the closer, "Fire Weaver." [5]

Roy Ayers Ubiquity: *Virgo Red* (1973, Verve -09) Pleasant enough with Ayers keeps his looping vibes out front of the groove, but falters when they aim for anything more, especially "Love From the Sun." [4]

Roy Ayers Ubiquity: *Change Up the Groove* (1974, Verve -08) Not much of a change up, but they did manage to focus better, not even letting the occasional vocal disrupt the groove. [5]

Roy Ayers Ubiquity: *A Tear to a Smile* (1975), Verve -09) More vocals, a recipe for disaster that is saved only by hiring better outside vocalists; more original songs, which means there's less here to recognize, for better or (mostly) worse. [3]

Roy Ayers Ubiquity: *Vibrations* (1976, Verve -08) No covers, most of the vocals by Ayers, this lounges languorously until a backup singer gets the gospel spirit and someone cranks up the amp, which still isn't enough to overcome the pedestrian beats. [2]

Roy Ayers Ubiquity: *Lifeline* (1977, Verve -07) Funk, stuck in a relatively minimalist groove, with occasional gospel antics; the leader's vibes have never been more irrelevant. [3]

Roy Ayers: *You Send Me* (1978, Verve -08) Adds singer Carla Vaughn, starting off with the worst version ever of a Sam Cooke song; much better when it returns to form, with Ayers' mundane voice and generic funk grooves. [2]

Albert Ayler

Tenor saxophonist, was a major avant-garde figure in the mid-1960s, finding spiritual depth in frenzied free noise, but as the decade came to a close he became increasingly scattered, then died at age 34 in 1970, a suicide or a victim of murder or bad luck, no one knows.

Albert Ayler Trio: *Spiritual Unity* (1964, ESP-Disk -05) One of the landmarks of the '60s avant-garde -- Ayler's defining moment, but also a high point in the careers of trio mates Gary Peacock and Sunny Murray, who never falter and never intrude on Ayler's rapid-fire inspiration; "Ghosts" rises with a memorable head, then rises again at the end in a second variation. [10]

Albert Ayler/Don Cherry/John Tchicai/Roswell Rudd/Gary Peacock/Sunny Murray: *New York Eye and Ear Control* (1964, ESP-Disk -08) Ayler's record, but all names are on the cover and all are notable, the four horns churning tumultuously, with Ayler's tenor sax reaching for the sacred, and Rudd's trombone plumbing the profane. [6]

Albert Ayler: *Goin' Home* (1964, Black Lion) This is a quartet with Call Cobbs Jr (piano, never heard of him), Henry Grimes, and Sunny Murray. All covers, most attributed "trad. arr. Ayler," most gospel standards like "Down By the Riverside," "Deep River," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "When the Saints Go Marching In." Several of these have multiple takes. The arrangements are relatively straightforward, and Ayler plays soprano as well as tenor sax, so this is pretty much free of his typical honks and slurs. Whether this represents a less developed stage (it was Feb. 1964, and the real Ayler was very much in evidence later in the year, so if so he moved quickly thereafter), or is just an accommodation to the material, isn't clear. An analogue for the latter might be Coltrane's *Ballads*, which appeared well after the 1961 Vanguard sessions, but before he went off the deep end. Still, the band is capable of moving much further out, and Sunny Murray seems already to be there. Offhand, this doesn't strike me as very important, and its relative listenability isn't exactly what one looks to Ayler for. [5]

Albert Ayler Quartet: *The Hilversum Session* (1964, ESP-Disk -07) This is the sort of session that would make an ideal complement to some sort of "Deluxe Edition" reissue of Ayler's 1964 landmark *Spiritual Unity*. The former album's trio, with Gary Peacock on bass and Sunny Murray on drums, reappear, reprising "Ghosts" and "Spirits" and adding other Ayler pieces. But this does more than reiterate: the fourth member is Don Cherry, whose cornet shadows Ayler's lines and lifts the band's spiritual exultation heavenward. [9]

Albert Ayler and Don Cherry: *Vibrations* (1964, Freedom/Black Lion -73) This seems to be a quartet, with Gary Peacock and Sunny Murray, recorded on a European tour and not released until 1973 on Freedom. The songbook is Ayler's, with two versions of "Ghosts" -- the second starts out like a bebop anthem, breaking up into an improvisation that is so Ayler it's almost a caricature, pivoting on honks out of register, with Murray sounding like nobody else. Then Cherry gets his crack at it,

sounding more bebop in dodgy sound, then Peacock gets a solo which is mostly subliminal. The restoration of the theme is more chaotic. [5]

Albert Ayler: *Bells/Prophecy* (1964-65, ESP-Disk -05) *Prophecy* was recorded a month before *Spiritual Unity*, with same trio and same songs, for all intents a dry run; *Bells*, recorded a year later with extra fire-power in Donald Ayler's trumpet and Charles Tyler's, was originally issued as a 19:54 one-sided LP, a relatively clean glimpse of the brothers' future groups. [9]

Albert Ayler: *Spirits Rejoice* (1965, ESP) More of the usual primitivist cacophony, with Charles Tyler's alto piling on top of Albert's tenor saxophone, and Donald blowing his trumpet with his usual ineptness. Still, this has a good taste of the odd energy and raw nerve that put Ayler over the top. [+]

Albert Ayler: *Slugs' Saloon* (1966, ESP-Disk, 2CD -05) A quintet, with the Ayler brothers in powerful form and Michel Samson's violin for contrast and complexity; the big pieces are rough hewn, playful, disorderly, subversive, and rather tough going, which is about par for this stage. [6]

Albert Ayler: *Love Cry* (1967-68, Impulse) Mostly repeated riff pieces with his brother Donald Ayler, no one's idea of a first-rate trumpet player. [5]

Albert Ayler: *New Grass* (1968, Impulse -05) Girlfriend Mary Maria Parks takes the horn by the balls and cuts loose with a raucous r&b record; the saxophonist offers some old-fashioned honking, but mostly reverts to form, juxtaposing his usual plaintive, tortured search against the certainty of Pretty Purdie's drums. [6]

Albert Ayler: *Music Is the Healing Force of the Universe* (1969, Verve/Impulse -03) A knuckleball you never knew he had, with three vocals by Mary Parks (dba Mary Maria), one by Ayler, some honking gutbucket blues, and bagpipes which he plays with the same passionate primitivism he always brought to the tenor sax. [+]

Albert Ayler: *The Last Album* (1969, Impulse) Hard to figure, coming out a year before his unexpected death. Opens with an oblique guitar solo by Henry Vestine finally joined by Ayler on bagpipes, then you get Mary Maria Parks's spoken word interplay with the saxophonist, then some vintage sounding free sax, then more oddities. The songs are all credited to Parks, his girlfriend at the time. Could find a future in the guitar-sax duet on "Toiling," or Ayler's own past in the bass-sax duet on "Water Music," but falls off the deep end with vocals like "Desert Blood." [5]

Buster Bailey

Buster Bailey: *All About Memphis* (1958, Felsted) This is the only LP under his name, but Bailey was one of the most important clarinetists of early jazz, starting with W.C. Handy, going on to King Oliver, Fletcher Henderson, Mills Blue Rhythm Band, and John Kirby; his core quartet "Beale Street Blues" is a sheer delight, "Memphis Blues" sneaks up on you, and for his originals, they bring in Vic Dickenson for a tailgate party. [8]

Mildred Bailey

Mildred Bailey: *Mrs. Swing* (1929-42, Proper -4CD -03) Born near the Washington/Idaho border, she left home to sing in speakeasies while her brother teamed up with Bing Crosby and landed a job with Paul Whiteman. She joined Whiteman's orchestra after an audition in L.A. and had her signature hit

with "Rockin' Chair," but she made her mark as a jazz singer on records with Eddie Lang, the Dorsey Brothers, and Red Norvo -- the Mr. to her Mrs. Swing. It seems inevitable to talk about her in terms of race, but it also seems archaic. Sure, she thought of herself as white (although she was part Coeur d'Alene Indian), but aside from her voice -- small and girlish, but remarkably clear and succinct -- she took all of her cues from black singers: most obviously, Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong. She often recorded with black musicians, including a jive duet with Roy Eldridge. It also seems inevitable to contrast her with Billie Holiday, but for my money they have much more in common than not: neither improvised, but both had exquisite phrasing, timing, and rapport with their musicians -- most of all their common denominator, Teddy Wilson. Both had devoted fans, but stardom eluded them, in no small part due to popular prejudices. And both had tough lives from childhood to premature deaths, which were precipitated by self-destructive tendencies. But one difference is that virtually everything Holiday ever cut has been kept in print, while Bailey's work up to 1942, when she left Columbia for Decca, has until recently been hard-to-impossible to find. Mosaic now has a 10-CD box set, but this 4-CD box is smartly chosen, more useful, and a lot cheaper. [10]

Mildred Bailey: *The Incomparable Mildred Bailey* (1933-42, Columbia/Legacy -03) Not the heavyweight bargain that the Proper box is, but cut-for-cut even stronger, the four cuts missing from the box more than holding their own. [10]

Chet Baker

Chet Baker: *Ensemble* (1953, Pacific Jazz -04) From its birth, the most distinctive thing about cool jazz was that it was the product of arrangers, who gave it a chamber music feel; Jack Montrose arranged this, setting Baker atop three saxophones, piano, bass and drums, endowing it with a light, lively sound. [+]

Chet Baker: *Sings and Plays* (1955, Pacific Jazz -04) A favorite of those most smitten by him, his voice has never sounded clearer or more plaintive, his trumpet is a model of economy, and the two cuts with cellos unobtrusive; I find this more consistent and more appealing than his best-ofs, but it's always a close call with Baker. [9]

Chet Baker: *Big Band* (1956, Pacific Jazz -04) Two sessions, 10-11 piece bands, various arrangers, all pretty much standard fare for the time and place, meaning that they are light and snappy; the nominal leader's role is harder than usual to make out, especially given that they didn't even put his picture on the cover. [5]

Chet Baker and Art Pepper: *Playboys* (1956, Pacific Jazz) I played this one three times today, and never got any traction. Part of the problem may be too much Baker, too little Pepper; part may be the mostly Jimmy Heath programme (without the benefit of Heath's sax). I dunno. This sounds like a lot of mid-'50s west coast cool, except too busy to really be cool. Not bad, just little traction. [5]

Chet Baker: *The Very Best* (1954-56, Pacific Jazz -05) Baker never really changed but he got old surprisingly fast -- his pretty face turned craggy, the freshness and naivete of his first music taking on an air of nostalgia if never self-parody; of all the slices of his discography, this is where it starts, at least without dragging Gerry Mulligan in; the six vocals cover his range, and a couple are classic; the instrumentals are smogless. [9]

Chet Baker: *Sextet* (1954-57, Pacific Jazz -04) Featuring Bud Shank, Bob Brookmeyer and Russ

Freeman, with arrangements by Jack Montrose, Johnny Mandel or Bill Holman, this chamber group is a miniature big band with a soft ensemble sound. [5]

Chet Baker: *Prince of Cool: The Pacific Jazz Years* (1952-57, Pacific Jazz -3CD -04) Lots of people adore Chet Baker, but I don't. I've always found his trumpet work anemic, even while conceding that his logic is beyond fault. He didn't play fast or high, and he rarely showed a shred of emotion -- at least any of the warm and fuzzy ones. But his vocals were even more affectless, and that's what his fans really fell for. He had been cajoled into singing as a teenager and developed a style that engaged the songs as minimally as possible. I suspect that the root of my problem with him is that I find his style embarrassing, but he managed to persevere, turning embarrassment into disinterest, which could easily be taken for vulnerability. Nobody else sang like that, and the fragility of his singing soon infected his trumpet. With the swing bands on the wane and the beboppers flaunting their virtuosity, Baker's extreme contrast epitomized something else: cool. From his emergence as a leader around 1952 to his death in 1978 his career waxed and waned but his music was remarkably consistent -- the only change being that as he accumulated the wear and tear of a rough life his indifference became even more poignant. Baker's early work for Pacific Jazz has been sliced and diced many times over -- the booklet here shows the covers of no less than 20 other albums or compilations, many redundant. This one splits him three ways: "Chet Sings," "Chet Plays," and "Chet & Friends" -- the most conspicuous friends were Art Pepper and Gerry Mulligan, with Baker's modest formality a fine complement for his voluble partners. Still, I'm not sure that "best of" is a concept that fits Baker well: his aesthetic is so convoluted and so personal that there's little if any common ground for evaluating him. So this winds up being just another slice and dice job. [+]

Chet Baker: *It Could Happen to You: Chet Baker Sings* (1958, Riverside/OJC -10) Either you're touched by the poignant pathos in Baker's voice or repulsed; he has no range, scant command of nuance, and no tricks up his sleeve (other than his plaintive trumpet, rarely in evidence here), but for once he is utterly at ease with the melodies: try the bonus "You Make Me Feel So Young" -- probably cut from the original album because he sounds so skillful. [7]

Chet Baker in New York (1958, Riverside) Cut with a quartet, which provides a good showcase for pianist Al Haig; augmented with Johnny Griffin on three cuts. Nice work. [+]

Chet Baker: *Chet* (1958-59, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -07) The original back cover touts "the lyrical trumpet of CHET BAKER," but the more descriptive term is "slow"; in Baker's day, that also passed for romantic -- even if you're unsure whether the cover girl draped over Baker's shoulder is in love or merely asleep. [6]

Chet Baker: *Plays the Best of Lerner & Loewe* (1959, Fantasy/OJC -13) Show tunes, played by a group that is usually seven pieces deep and talented -- Zoot Sims, Pepper Adams, Bill Evans on half -- but only the trumpet makes much of an impression; Orrin Keepnews produced, no vocals, no extras. [6]

Chet Baker: *The Best of Chet Baker* (1952-59, Riverside -04) Aside from two early cuts led by Gerry Mulligan, this sticks to Baker's 1958-59 tenure with Riverside even though Fantasy had other options; the three vocal cuts are deeper and smoother than his earlier work on Pacific Jazz; the trumpet is slower and sometimes more poignant, showing that to the extent he evolved at all, which wasn't much, he got old young. [+]

Chet Baker: *Chet Is Back!* (1962, RCA -03) Cut in Italy with a European band including guitarist René Thomas and saxophonist Bobby Jaspar. The eight standards are a bit more upbeat, engaged even,

than cool, a fine vocal-less trumpet showcase. The album was reissued unchanged as *The Italian Sessions* in 1996, but the 2003 reissue adds Ennio Morricone soundtrack schmaltz with strings and vocals, a dull ending. [5]

Chet Baker: *She Was Too Good to Me* (1974, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -10) A lot of names on the front cover -- Hubert Laws and Paul Desmond larger than Bob James, Ron Carter, Steve Gadd, Jack DeJohnette, and "Arranged and Conducted by Don Sebesky" -- but in the end only the matinee idol matters; aside from the occasional Desmond solo, it's all shading and backdrop; Baker sings four tunes, plays his charming little trumpet on all eight, has a nice outing despite it all. [6]

Chet Baker: *Love Songs* (1953-74, Columbia/Legacy -04) Slim pickings: five cuts from the 1953-54 *Chet Baker & Strings*, which like all period jazz star + strings outings is saddled with a dreadful classics-drenched string orchestra, although occasionally the jazz musicians (including in this case, Zoot Sims, Bud Shank, and Jack Montrose) have something worthwhile to contribute. The rest comes from 1974 recordings for Creed Taylor: more anonymous big bands, even more strings. Very slight work, so far from prime it's tempting to deprecate it. [3]

Chet Baker: *Jazz Moods: Cool* (1974-75, Columbia/Legacy -05) Sony owns a tiny sliver of Baker courtesy of Creed Taylor International, which means Don Sebesky orchestration, and even there they had to slip in a 19:14 cut from Jim Hall and two live cuts with Gerry Mulligan to fill this out; it's surprisingly lovely, with Baker's trumpet filling in rather than standing out, and two of his usual puny vocals. [+]

Chet Baker/Wolfgang Lackerschmid (1979, Inak) A lot more lively than you'd expect from the famously somnambulant trumpet player and an otherwise unknown German vibraphonist. Credit the rhythm section: guitarist Larry Coryell and a couple of Williamses (Buster and Tony). [+]

Chet Baker: *Peace* (1982, Enja -07) Part of a new "24-bit master series," the remastering brings out the subtle elegance in Baker's trumpet, light as a feather here, but offset from David Friedman's marimba and vibraphone it carries all the weight; no vocals, two alternate takes. [+]

Chet Baker: *Chet in Chicago* (1986, Enja -08) Unreleased studio session, volume 5 in Enja's Chet Baker Legacy series, with Bradley Young's piano trio, working bebop standards, with sprightly piano, fine trumpet, and Baker whisking his way through his umpteenth "My Funny Valentine." [7]

Chet Baker: *The Last Great Concert: My Favorite Songs, Vol. 1 & 2* (1988, Enja/Justin Time -2CD -04) This concert was recorded two weeks before Baker, 59 and looking a good deal older, fell to his death (or was pushed) from a window in Paris. It was recorded with the NDR Big Band and the Radio Orchestra Hannover, although some songs were cut with smaller groups, including Herb Geller and Walter Norris. It reruns Baker's usual songbook, featuring his limp trumpet and barely cohesive vocals -- the trumpet sorely eroded with age, the voice lapsing into a bored beauty. He's one of the few major jazz figures I've never come around on, and this clearly isn't the place to start. Great only if you're already in love with him, but occasionally pretty nonetheless. [4]

Chet Baker: *Career 1952-1988* (1952-88, Shout! Factory -2CD -05) Two good ideas here: one is to put the instrumentals and vocals on separate discs; the other is to document Baker all the way to the end of his career. He recorded prolifically throughout his career but never stayed on one label long -- the Pacific Jazz records that established him as a star cover a mere four years, and even then he also recorded elsewhere -- and during the '70s and '80s most of his records were cut for small European

labels. Shout! Factory doesn't chase them all down -- nothing from his well regarded Criss Cross releases, nor from Philology or Red, but they did manage to license prime material from Enja and Steeplechase, and they make good use of widely scattered pieces on U.S. labels. The wide range of band contexts and material would trip up the flow of the record for anyone else, but Baker was such a steady trumpeter and such a preciously limited singer that he's able to hold together everything from quartets to the NDR Big Band and Creed Taylor's megaproductions. [9]

Ginger Baker

Ginger Baker and the DJQ20: *Coward of the County* (1998, Atlantic) Unlike Baker's other jazz records, this isn't a showcase for his drumming: it's an ensemble that he anchors. Nice music, at when it's just the DJQ20; when guest James Carter cranks up it is a good deal more than nice. [+]

Billy Bang

Billy Bang's Survival Ensemble: *Black Man's Blues/New York Collage* (1977-78, NoBusiness 2CD -11) The late, great violinist's first two albums -- the first so obscure I missed it when I assembled a discography for my 2005 *Voice* piece on Bang. A quartet for the first record, with Bilal Abdur Rahman on tenor and soprano sax, William Parker on bass, and Rashid Bakr on drums. Rahman, an old friend of Bang's, picked up Islam in prison and recorded reluctantly but more often than not his cutting and slashing is terrific here. Both albums are hit and miss, with bits of spoken word spouting political critique -- "when the poor steal, it's called looting; when the rich steal, it's called profit" is one turn of phrase. Second album adds Henry Warner on alto sax and Khuwana Fuller on congas -- Warner's another player who shows up on rare occasions but always makes a big impression. Way back when I would probably have hedged my grade, seeing each album as promising but half-baked, but now they're indisputable pieces of history -- and not just because Bang and Parker went on to have brilliant careers. Also note that the label in Lithuania that rescued them cared enough to provide a 36-page booklet on the era and this remarkable music. [9]

Billy Bang Quintet: *Rainbow Gladiator* (1981, Soul Note) Not his debut, but in many ways his coming out party. Charles Tyler and Michelle Rosewoman compete for front-line space, and the interplay is exhilarating more often than not. [9]

Billy Bang: *Sweet Space/Untitled Gift* (1979-82, 8th Harmonic Breakdown -2CD -05) Two early albums reflecting the New York loft scene. The first is a septet with three horns up front, parrying off simple vamps with featured Frank Lowe the main threat. Bang takes a couple of turns with the horns, but mostly fills in. The second album is a quartet with Don Cherry on pocket trumpet. The smaller group leaves Bang much more space, and his tone and attack have become much more distinctive. Both records are exhilarating. [9]

Billy Bang Sextet: *The Fire From Within* (1984, Soul Note -85) Rhapsody files this under trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah, who dominates the early going, but the violin-guitar-bass keep it all in sync and racing along, as does Thurman Barker's marimba on top of Zen Matsuura's drums. [9]

Billy Bang Quartet: *Valve No. 10* (1988, Soul Note -91) "September 23rd" is one of Bang's most striking forays into spoken word, with its fractured jazz background at one point breaking into a chant of "a love supreme." Sirone sounds big on bass. Frank Lowe sounds restrained, like he's working inside

the tradition rather than trying to knock it down -- one of his tastiest performances. Dennis Charles is as steady as ever. "Bien-Hoa Blues" has a bit of Vietnam in it. [9]

Billy Bang with Sun Ra/John Ore/Andrew Cyrille: *A Tribute to Stuff Smith* (1992, Soul Note -93) A rare piece of repertory in Bang's discography. It's interesting to think of Smith as the mainstream counterpart to Leroy Jenkins in Bang's background, but he came to Smith later, possibly through the pianist here. Not breathtaking, but certainly a delight. [9]

Billy Bang: *Commandment (For the Sculpture of Alain Kirili)* (1997, No More) A solo showcase for a gallery opening. The cover photos show him standing in the midst of Kirili's abstract thigh-high sculptures, like he's serenading midgets. Lack of a drummer leaves him ambling a bit, but his radical deconstruction of "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" is memorable, and his introductions are disarming. [5]

Billy Bang: *Bang On!* (1997, Justin Time) Some standards ("Sweet Georgia Brown," "Yesterdays," "Willow Weep for Me") to go with Sun Ra and a batch of originals, all played with formidable intensity. No horns, nothing to detract from the violin except D.D. Jackson's rough-hewn piano. [9]

Billy Bang: *Big Bang Theory* (1999, Justin Time -00) This may be the least avant group Bang has worked with -- Curtis Lundy and Cody Moffett are pros who mostly lean toward hard bop, while unknown pianist Alexis Hope sounds forthright without betraying any particular predilections. The song selection tries out various directions without settling on any one. Short takes of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "One for Jazz" -- Bang's poem for his longtime drummer Dennis Charles -- are more lushly orchestrated than they are elsewhere in Bang's oeuvre. But the one that comes together strongest is "Little Sunflower," the closer penned by Freddie Hubbard. So hard bop wins out in the end. [+]

Chris Barber

Chris Barber: *Chris Barber's Blues Book Volume One/Good Mornin' Blues* (1961-65, BGO -97) The two records here both feature singer Otilie Patterson, aka Mrs. Chris Barber. The CD is packed with 26 songs, mostly blues or r&b hits, plus a handful of songs credited to Patterson, and a few trad pieces arranged by Barber. She's a good singer -- rather affectless, but with a clear voice and some gumption. Barber is one of the greats of British trad jazz, and I always get a kick out of his trombone. Still, this doesn't strike me as an especially good outing for them. My main complaint is that the songs are too short, the compression giving the band no room to wiggle or shout. Also, a few pieces have group vocals, which work much less well than Patterson's features. [5]

Chris Barber: *Copulatin Jazz* (1993, Great Southern) Another fine trad album. [+]

Gato Barbieri

Gato Barbieri: *Last Tango in Paris* (1969, Varese Sarabande -04) A famous soundtrack, but a soundtrack still. The strings can get annoying, the atmospheric hit and miss. Barbieri's sax can be glorious, but there's not enough of it. [5]

Gato Barbieri: *Bolivia/Under Fire* (1971-73, Bluebird -03) Two albums of latin rhythms and earthy exuberance from funkmeister Lonnie Liston Smith and Argentina's saxophone colossus; think of it as Coltrane with congas and his ass on fire. [9]

Gato Barbieri: *Chapter One: Latin America* (1973, Impulse -09) The Argentine tenor saxophonist joins Coltrane's label and does him one better, ecstatically extending Coltrane's sound and technique to Latin standards while cranking up the party percussion. [9]

Gato Barbieri: *Chapter Two: Hasta Siempre* (1973, Impulse -09) Same deal as *Chapter One*, which is why these albums fit so seamlessly in the 1997 *Latino America* reissue; maybe a bit more ragged around the edges, but when you live dangerously and survive, that's called a rush. [9]

Gato Barbieri: *Chapter Four: Alive in New York* (1975, Impulse -05) Like many live performances, this one picks up speed as it progresses, eventually delivering on its Coltrane to cha-cha-cha promises; like many live performances, it's also thinner sounding than its studio predecessors. [6]

Gato Barbieri: *The Impulse Story* (1973-75, Impulse -06) Argentine tenor saxophonist, emerged in the '60s on ESP and Flying Dutchman, which has some classic examples of his whirling dervish style. This excerpts four albums of Coltrane-ish powerhouse sax over roiling Latin beats. Alt-choice: *Latino America* (1973-74, 2CD), his first two chapters. [8]

Gato Barbieri: *Ruby, Ruby* (1978, Verve -07) The music is full of synth strings, lush and sweeping at best but more often forgettable, or best forgotten; the Latin percussion helps pick up the pace, and Barbieri's tenor sax remains singular, a thin reed straining against the weight of the world. [6]

Gato Barbieri: *Tropico* (1978, A&M -09) Disco beats, swirling choruses, banks of synthy strings with synthy fake Latin beats, the only thing that salvages this is the tenor saxophonist, who sounds magnificent even buried past his navel in murk. [5]

Joey Baron

Joey Baron: *Tongue in Groove* (1992, JMT) Baron is a drummer with avant-garde leanings and associations, although his drumming is more eclectic than that (not that avant-garde drumming isn't eclectic). This was his first album, a trio with two horns, often playing in unison, which leaves him a fair amount of space to drum. The horns are Ellery Eskelin (tenor saxophone) and Steve Swell (trombone), who also have avant-garde leanings and associations, and are top-notch players. Yet in this stripped down format, as often as not what emerges is humor -- the inherent ridiculousness of a trio format which is incapable of swing (no bass) or stride (no piano), where the key sound is the dirty vibrato of Swell's trombone, and where Eskelin's tenor is almost as ugly. The potential upside of such a combination is very limited; it's hard to imagine any way to turn this into a great album, but in its great humor, in its elemental chops, it nonetheless is about as good as it can be. [+]

Joey Baron: *RAIsedpleasuredot* (1994, New World) Very interesting: the front line pairs avant-jazzists Ellery Eskelin (tenor sax) and Steve Swell (trombone), producing an interesting mix of sounds, which both push aggressively. The only other musician is drummer Baron. Closes with a brief rundown of "The Girl From Ipanema," a fair indication of their stuff. [+]

Joey Baron: *Down Home* (1997, Intuition) This is a delightful quartet, with Ron Carter and Bill Frisell filling in nicely behind and around Arthur Blythe's saxophone. [9]

Ray Barretto

Ray Barretto: *Acid* (1968, Fania) Congalero from Spanish Harlem, with over sixty records a major

figure in salsa and Latin jazz from 1960 to his death in 2006; this is widely lauded, as good a place to start as any; two English lyrics don't spoil the fun, but what you need to hear are the intense rhythm rolls. [9]

Kenny Barron

Kenny Barron Trio: *The Perfect Set: Live at Bradley's II* (1996, Sunnyside -05) With Ray Drummond and Ben Riley, as perfect a modern jazz trio as you can find. Haven't heard the previously released first set, but my inside source tells me this is the better of the two. As befits Riley, this closes with two Monk tunes, and one of Barron's originals is decidedly Monkish. Just what you'd expect, which is to say it merits the faint complaint of "no surprises." [7]

Gary Bartz

Gary Bartz Ntu Troop: *Harlem Bush Music* (1970-71, Milestone -04) This stitches together two more albums from the chance historical meeting of the jazz fringe with the black power masses, originally released as *Uhuru* and *Taifa*, but cut from the same sessions, with the same group, under the same rubric of "Harlem Bush Music." Bartz was a hard bop alto saxophonist who had done a tour with Art Blakey and would soon hook up with Miles Davis, but while his idiom was bop his fast and furious style came from the avant-garde. He is joined here by Andy Bey, whose polished jazz singing softens the edges of Bartz's agitprop lyrics. This renders "Vietcong" into a catchy hymn, although some lines bear repeating: "twenty years of fighting for his homeland/he won't give up the rights for no man." In "Blue (A Folk Tale)" Bartz critiques, "blues ain't nothing but misery on your mind"; but the blues he makes is a vehicle of strength and endurance and hope. [9]

Count Basie

Count Basie: *Class of '54* (1954, Black Lion -89) The eight nonet tracks are a nice interval between the classic Basie band and its "atomic" successor. The radio shots are a more mixed bag, with the usual announcer interference. [5]

Count Basie: *The Count Basie Story* (1957-59, Roulette -2CD -04) The new testament band reprises their favorite stories from the old testament, from "Moten Swing" to "Red Bank Boogie"; the atomic precision is a marvel to behold, but the retrospective begs comparison with the swaggering territory band Basie moved to New York, reminding one how much "Lester Leaps In" depends on Lester. [+]

Count Basie: *Basie at Birdland* (1961, Roulette Jazz -07) This is about where Basie's "Second Testament" (as they put it here) band starts to slip, but they can still kick the old songbook into high orbit, the section work is atomic, a key tenor sax solo (Budd Johnson?) is much further out than expected, and Jon Hendricks mumbles his Clark Terry impression on "Whirly Bird"; nearly double the length of the original LP, the extra weight suits them. [9]

Count Basie: *On My Way & Shoutin' Again* (1962, Verve -09) The big band takes on ten Neal Hefti pieces, tightly arranged, immaculately played, but not as explosive as the band was a few years earlier; recording a couple weeks after the Cuban Missile Crisis, maybe Basie decided to cool off his atomic shtick. [6]

Count Basie & Friends: *100th Birthday Bash* (1957-62, Roulette -2CD -04) This is a pseudo-event imagined 100 years after Basie's 1904 birth, long after most of its participants have passed on; an excuse to gather up a pastiche of atomic-era Basie with guest stars, including Ben Webster, Illinois Jacquet, Nat Cole, Billy Eckstine, Tony Bennett and Sarah Vaughan; of these, only Vaughan adds much to the band's impeccable crackle. [5]

Count Basie: *Basie Land* (1963, Verve -09) Billy Byers composed ten songs and sharpened up the charts, giving the stars more solo space while tuning up the machine. [9]

Bobby Battle

Bobby Battle Quartet with David Murray: *The Offering* (1990, Mapleshade) The "with" clause is the one that matters. Battle is a drummer who has catalogued nothing else under his name, no doubt because he also wrote nothing here. Six long, relaxed performances, the two classics (Waller and Monk) being the ones you most notice, but solid work all around. [+]

Walter Beasley

Walter Beasley: *Beasley* (1987, Verve -08) A slight soul singer slotted as jazz because he plays alto and soprano sax, kicked off his debut album with the forthright "I'm So Happy," which for lack of anything better is also the closer. [4]

Walter Beasley: *Just Kickin' It* (1989, Verve -08) Title cut leads off, a trivial slice of funk that kicks everything else here, most of which drags ass, some even unable to get up a vocal. [3]

Walter Beasley: *Intimacy* (1992, Verve -08) Nothing memorable here, let alone intimate or sexy or even the least bit funky; fewer vocals than the first two albums. [3]

Sidney Bechet

Sidney Bechet: *In Paris: Volume 1* (1953-64, Disques Vogue/RCA -95) A nice, attractive series of French reissues from the 1950s as American jazz stars washed up on the Left Bank; the Bechet is the exception, two suites with classical orch leaving him little room to improvise. [3]

Gordon Beck

The Gordon Beck Quartet: *Experiments With Pops* (1967, Art of Life -01) the "pops" the pianist tackles are AM hits of the day -- "These Boots Are Made for Walking," "Norwegian Wood," "Sunny," "Up, Up and Away," "Michelle," "I Can See for Miles," "Good Vibrations," "Monday, Monday" -- but there's nothing soft or saccharine about the versions, and it's not gratuitous sacrilege either; the secret is the great avant-garde drummer Tony Oxley and a young guitarist named John McLaughlin. [9]

Bix Beiderbecke

Bix Beiderbecke and the Chicago Cornets (1924-25, Milestone -92) Relatively early material from Beiderbecke, but the legendary cornet player only plays on the first 19 cuts: the first 15 Wolverines cuts, two by the Sioux City Six (the only cuts here with Frankie Trumbauer), and two by Bix and His

Rhythm Jugglers. Also includes are two Wolverines cuts with Jimmy McPartland in his place, plus seven cuts by the Bucktown Five with Muggsy Spanier on cornet. Pretty good stuff, but nothing spectacular. [+]

Bix Beiderbecke: *Young Man With a Golden Horn: 1924-1930* (1924-30, Jazz Legends -03) White, played cornet, dead at 28, such a storybook legend he's come to overshadow his bandleaders Jean Goldkette and Paul Whiteman and his underrated sidekick, C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer. He may be a bit overrated, but that's partly because his unique sound had to contend with less supple bands and singers (not to complain about Bing Crosby). Compares to Louis Armstrong like Clifford Brown compares to Dizzy Gillespie. [9]

Harry Belafonte

The Essential Harry Belafonte (1952-77, RCA/Legacy -2CD -05) Years could be shorter, as the three songs with 1977 release dates don't have recording dates. The latest given recording date is 1970. Born in Harlem, raised in Jamaica, proclaimed the "king of calypso" before anything we now recognize as Jamaican music had even been recorded -- and any real calypso was readily available -- Belafonte was unique among folk artists in his '50s heyday, and unclassifiable today -- except perhaps as the world's first world music star. He combined Leadbelly's penchant for crowd pleasing with the political rigor of the Lomaxes, could croon a ballad to suit the Cole-Mathis fans, and enjoyed something of an acting career. All this made him a success, but as an outsider his folk songs were meant to break down barriers. If some like "Cotton Fields," "Danny Boy," and "Hava Nageela" seem too obvious today, that's because they worked. And if "Abraham, Martin & John" seems sappy, remember that he was on the lines with MLK. I use the past tense here because his musical form is dépassé, but he's still here, in the news recently making political comments easily flagged as outrageous, but give him a fair listen and he makes more sense than most. [9]

Marcus Belgrave

Marcus Belgrave: *Gemini* (1974, Universal Sound -04) Born in Chester PA, Belgrave moved to Detroit when he was 17 and became a local legend and, these days, an elder statesman of the Detroit jazz scene without ever really breaking out of town. This early album was cut with musicians centered around Phil Ranelin and his Tribe, such as Wendell Harrison (tenor sax), along with Detroit drummer Roy Brooks. They work in what for lack of a better word we'll call a left-wing hard bop idiom: nothing here sounds like they're into pushing boundaries, but they certainly listen to cats who do, even though they're more into togetherness. So this is tight and closely held together. Belgrave's trumpet is delightful, but the largish group limits his focus. Good record, but not sharp enough to be a great one. [+]

Sathima Bea Benjamin

Sathima Bea Benjamin: *A Morning in Paris* (1963, Ekapa -07) A lucky break for the South African jazz singer, paramour of the future Abdullah Ibrahim, to be in Paris next to Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, playing piano on two cuts each; she is a patient standards singer, drawing out fine shades of meaning, taking the two Ellington cuts especially slow. [6]

Tony Bennett

Tony Bennett's Greatest Hits of the '50s (1950-59, RPM/Columbia/Legacy -06) His big hits came early, forgettable stuff with his fine voice mired in Percy Faith arrangements -- his only post-1953 top-ten hit came in 1957 and didn't make the cut here; one cut with Neil Hefti and two with Count Basie give him rare chances to play with a band that adds something. [5]

Tony Bennett: *I Left My Heart in San Francisco* (1957-62, RPM/Columbia/Legacy -06) Assembled from scattered singles to complement one of his biggest, the seven orchestras are mostly indistinguishable -- even Count Basie barely stands out, but part of that is how well Bennett pulls them together. [+]

Tony Bennett/Dave Brubeck: *The White House Sessions, Live 1962* (1962, Columbia/Legacy -13) Nothing new in their two short and separate sets, but both were riding their popular peaks, Brubeck opening with "Take Five" and Bennett closing with "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." Then they merge, Brubeck's Quartet replacing Ralph Sharon's trio, and it gets wilder, with a much fiercer Brubeck ready to rumble, keeping Bennett quick on his toes as he skitters through "Lullaby of Broadway," "That Old Black Magic," two more. [7]

Tony Bennett: *Live at the Sahara: Las Vegas, 1964* (1964, Columbia/Legacy -13) Recorded for an album that got shelved, probably because it's just a rehash of his early albums, but distance helps put them in focus and turns it into a tight hour on CD versus four LP sides; only two cuts longer than the 3:14 "Overture": Jobim from his popular heyday, and a "Comedy Routine" where Milton Berle and Danny Thomas can't shut up. [6]

Tony Bennett: *Jazz Moods: Cool* (1957-67, Columbia/Legacy -05) Not my idea of a cool singer, but after Chet Baker who is? here they go for swing tunes with a little snap to them, like "I Get a Kick Out of You" or "That Old Black Magic" -- the latter with Dave Brubeck, more upbeat than Bennett's work with Bill Evans -- giving the impression that he could've been a pretty decent jazz singer. [+]

Tony Bennett's Greatest Hits of the '60s (1960-69, RPM/Columbia/Legacy -06) The former Anthony Benedetto didn't break from the pack in the '60s so much as keep standing while all the other big band boy singers, even the former Chairman of the Board, crumbled away. Ever since then he's been the most serviceable icon of a bygone era, perfectly preserved but always available. You forget that he never was that popular -- the booklets don't bother with charting his hits, since the numbers invariably fall short of your expectations. (His decade best was #14 for "I Wanna Be Around"; his signature "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" peaked at #19.) Aside from hard work and stubborn belief in his style, his one asset was a remarkably clear, powerful voice, able to overcome most of the embarrassingly lame arrangements. [7]

Tony Bennett: *Perfectly Frank* (1992, RPM/Columbia/Legacy -06) Sparsely backed by Ralph Sharon's piano trio, so Bennett's voice practically stands on its own; he's as entitled to try Sinatra, but I'm reminded of Benny Carter's response when asked what he had learned from Johnny Hodges: "never to play any of his songs." [5]

Tony Bennett: *MTV Unplugged* (1994, RPM/Columbia/Legacy -06) Again with Ralph Sharon's trio, but this time on songs he's more comfortable with, summing up a long career that doesn't have much more to show; still, I could do without the applause, the dorking around with the band, and the two guest shots with singers who aspire to be even squarer than Bennett: K.D. Lang and Elvis Costello. [5]

Han Bennink

Han Bennink: *Nerve Beats* (1973, Atavistic -00) An amazing drummer, as the cymbal thrash on "Spooky Drums" more than points out; the title piece moves into a nother realm with a primitive drum machine serving as backdrop for Bennink's free association on trombone, clarinet, whatever, before he returns to form, banging on anything he can reach. [+]

George Benson

The George Benson Quartet: *It's Uptown* (1966, Columbia) No jazz artist ever arrived with more hype. His first album was titled *The New Boss Guitar of George Benson*, and the cover on this one (his second) proclaims, in red type as large as the green title, "The Most Exciting New Guitarist on the Jazz Scene Today." A few years before John McLaughlin, not to mention Jimi Hendrix (and let's throw in Sonny Sharrock), his claim rested on nothing more than splitting the distance between Wes Montgomery and Grant Green (although "Bullfight" suggests a passing interest in Bo Diddley). Still, he's never been framed better, with Lonnie Smith's organ breathing funk, and Ronnie Cuber's baritone sax well to the ugly side. And while he sings on three cuts, they're vintage jazz standards and not without interest (e.g., "A Foggy Day"). Too bad this was his career peak. [8]

George Benson: *Shape of Things to Come* (1968, Verve -07) With Wes Montgomery dead, Creed Taylor picked up this agreeable substitute, then fed him to Don Sebesky for the cosmopolitan treatment; he holds up better than Montgomery did, and closes with a treatment of "Last Train to Clarksville" (the Monkees' hit) that is inspired kitsch. [6]

George Benson: *Tell It Like It Is* (1969, Verve -08) Marty Sheller produced, adding a bit of Latin tinge, but there's no jazz interest here, just pop instrumentals -- the best a sly "My Cherie Amour" -- with Benson making his soul man move on three vocals, most successfully "Tell It Like It Is." [5]

George Benson: *I Got a Woman and Some Blues* (1969, Verve -08) I.e., "I Got a Woman," "Bluesadelic," "Good Morning Blues," although I suppose one could argue that "Without Her" tries to tie it together; singing more with less voice, sounds more like the progression of a loser. [Time: 29:52] [2]

George Benson: *White Rabbit* (1971, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) A few years shy of his pop breakthrough, so you can still treat him as a Wes Montgomery wannabe, here covering one of Montgomery's most pathetic covers ("California Dreaming"), Grace Slick, Legrand and Villa-Lobos; Sebesky arranged, focusing on the flutes and oboes this time which steadfastly refuse to emerge from the background. [5]

George Benson: *Beyond the Blue Horizon* (1971, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) A rare album defying all expectations: the organ is mere window dressing, and can fold up and disappear leaving the bass line to Ron Carter; the guitarist almost never invokes Wes Montgomery, either for better or worse; and drummer Jack DeJohnette never boxes himself in; but this starts slow and leaves no strong impressions, only an eclectic vibe. [6]

George Benson: *Body Talk* (1973, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) Not sure whether this is better or worse for Pee Wee Ellis's horn arrangements: the horns shag but never compete with the guitar line, which means they make for an ordinary background, but Benson's leads offer no surprises either -- only a better than average phrasing of what he's been doing all along. [5]

Borah Bergman

Borah Bergman with Andrew Cyrille: *The Human Factor* (1992, Soul Note -93) An underrated avant-garde pianist who passed last year (1933-2012) with a couple dozen albums from 1975 on, mostly intimate affairs like this duo with drummer Cyrille; his high speed flights can be exuberant and explosive (and sometimes melodramatic), his rarer balladry touching and precise ("When Autumn Comes" is a good example here). [8]

Borah Bergman with Hamid Drake: *Reflections on Ornette Coleman and the Stone House* (1995, Soul Note) Piano-drums duo, playing six Ornette Coleman songs (with a Bergman co-credit on "Stone House"); the sharp angles undo the slipperiness of the originals, doubling down on a previously unnoticed percussiveness. [6]

Borah Bergman/Oliver Lake: *A New Organization* (1997, Soul Note -88) Duo, recorded live at the Knitting Factory, most likely improved on the spot. It's tempting to just concentrate on Bergman's piano, especially since Lake can't be tuned out anyway. Bergman is a formidable pianist, and he's very much in the thick of this. [+]

Tim Berne

Tim Berne's Bloodcount: *Poisoned Minds: The Paris Concert* (1994, JMT -95) The second of three installments, running through two long pieces with many smaller sections, Berne's alto and baritone saxes entwined with Chris Speed's tenor or clarinet, while the guitar-bass-drums rhythm section hops all over the place. [6]

Tim Berne's Bloodcount: *Memory Select: The Paris Concert* (1994, JMT -95) Part trois, same group, with two more long pieces; the main problem is that the often interesting music struggles to be heard through quiet patches that would have been clearer in person. [5]

Andy Bey

Andy and the Bey Sisters: *'Round Midnight* (1965, Prestige -07) Sisters Salome and Geraldine complement brother Andy Bey, producing a tricky mix of harmonies that works sometimes -- the light "Squeeze Me" and the heavy "God Bless the Child" are two for different reasons -- but can also drag and stall, especially 'round the title tune. [5]

Andy Bey: *Ain't Necessarily So* (1997, 12th Street -07) Sly standards from a subtle and graceful jazz singer-pianist, recorded live at Birdland on the upswing of his comeback, with a pair of Washingtons filling out his trio; he turns even "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" into seduction. [7]

Big Black

Big Black: *Ethnic Fusion* (1982, Mutable Music -01) Not the hardcore rock band, nor any of several other Big Blacks I've run across. This one is Danny Ray, and he shows up on odd jobs every now and then, usually credited with percussion. Here he plays tumbas and bongos, and is joined by Anthony Wheaton on guitar. It's pretty minimal -- I like the rhythm, I like the guitar, I'm just not sure how much there really is here. [5]

Acker Bilk

Acker Bilk: *The Collection* (1973-78, Castle) Bilk was a British trad jazz clarinetist -- a pretty good one, in fact. But in 1961 he had a freak pop crossover hit, "Stranger on the Shore," a piece of elegant instrumental fluff that has haunted him ever since -- not unlike, say, Gene Chandler: take "Duke of Earl" from him and he's a totally different musician. "Stranger" leads off this set of mid-'70s easy listening cuts, anchored with a string orchestra that is neither trad nor jazz nor anything else you'd ever want to listen to. [2]

Lou Blackburn

Lou Blackburn: *The Complete Imperial Sessions* (1963, Blue Note -06) That would be two albums in one year with the same lineup, including trumpeter Freddie Hill and pianist Horace Tapscott; Blackburn was a Los Angeles trombonist without much under his own name, but these sessions are bright, swinging hard bop, even the one released as *Two-Note Samba* -- must have been a law in 1963 that everyone had to release a samba album. [8]

Ed Blackwell

Ed Blackwell: *Ed Blackwell Project, Vol. II: What It Be Like?* (1992, Enja -94) Graham Haynes (cornet), Carlos Ward (alto sax, flute), Mark Helias (bass), Ed Blackwell (drums), special guest: Don Cherry (trumpet, on "Lito Pt. 2" only). Cut shortly before Blackwell died; release shortly afterwards. Blackwell had few records in his own name, but was a key drummer in the avant-garde transitional years: most famously with Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry, and in the Coleman-inspired Old and New Dreams band, but he also played with Eric Dolphy, Archie Shepp, Mal Waldron, David Murray, Joe Lovano, and a few others. A little underrecorded to start, but it comes into better definition with some volume. Interesting work, not least because of the drummer. [+]

Brian Blade

Brian Blade: *Fellowship* (1998, Blue Note) Blade is a young drummer who's does a lot of fairly mainstream work, mostly on Blue Note. This is his first album, a fairly lavish affair produced by Daniel Lanois. He's a classy drummer. Of the other musicians here saxophonists Melvin Butler and Myron Walden make the most impact. Neither is a household name, even here, but both seem competent. I'm less certain about Lanois, who I blame for turning cuts like the 8:00 closer "Loving Without Asking" to sonic mush. Music this lush has to have some real panache to work (cf. Gil Evans), but this doesn't. [4]

Art Blakey

The premier drummer of the bebop movement started playing harder in the 1950s and invented hard bop, running his Jazz Messengers as a boot camp through which everyone who was anyone in the style passed, from Horace Silver to Wynton Marsalis.

Art Blakey: *The Jazz Messengers* (1956, Columbia/Legacy -97) In the beginning, with Donald Byrd, Hank Mobley, Horace Silver, and Doug Watkins -- looks like the bonus cuts which double the length substitute freely. Mobley wrote the most cuts, Silver chipped in and gives the hard bop a little extra

swing, Byrd shows his early promise. [9]

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers: *Drum Suite* (1956-57, Columbia/Legacy -05) First third is the first of several African and/or Cuban multi-drummer experiments, and not much comes of it; second third is a Messengers group with Bill Hardman and Jackie McLean, and third (the bonus) is a slightly earlier lineup showcasing Donald Byrd; Blakey never made a bad record in his first decade at the helm of the Messengers, but it's the bonus cuts that save this one. [6]

Art Blakey: *Holiday for Skins* (1958, Blue Note -06) One of many multi-drum experiments, following *Drum Suite* and *Orgy in Rhythm*; this one has three trap sets, seven Latino percussionists (including Ray Barretto), Donald Byrd trumpet, Ray Bryant piano, and Wendell Marshall bass; the drums never quite mesh, but Bryant, in particular, has some tasty moments. [6]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *At the Jazz Corner of the World* (1959, Blue Note -2CD -94) Typical, really. Band at this time featured Lee Morgan and Hank Mobley, Bobby Timmons and Jymie Merritt. [+]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *The Witch Doctor* (1961, Blue Note) The Lee Morgan/Wayne Shorter lineup again, not as consistent as *Roots and Herbs*, but nearly as great. [9]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *Mosaic* (1961, Blue Note -87) One of the most classic Messengers lineups, with Freddie Hubbard replacing Lee Morgan opposite Wayne Shorter, Curtis Fuller added on trombone, and Cedar Walton on piano. [9]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *Buhaina's Delight* (1961, Blue Note) Something for everyone, including fancy three-part horn arrangements and drum solos; I prefer the drum solos, but the whole group bursts with ideas. [9]

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers: *Roots & Herbs* (1961, Blue Note) The *Penguin Guide* called this the "great forgotten Blakey album," and it's sent me back to the stacks to see if I could find a better one. Not yet. Wayne Shorter wrote all of the pieces here, and he sounds as good as I've ever heard him, but Lee Morgan is even more incandescent, and Blakey's drumming is endlessly inventive. [10]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *The Freedom Rider* (1961, Blue Note -98) Prime band, prime period, although only two Wayne Shorter compositions. Some real fine Shorter saxophone. A lot of typically brilliant Lee Morgan. A rare Blakey writing credit, and guess what? Mostly drums. He was, after all, a great drummer before he became a great bandleader. [9]

Art Blakey: *Jazz Messengers!!!!* (1961, Impulse) Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Curtis Fuller, Bobby Timmons, Jymie Merritt -- possibly the greatest of all Blakey groups in what was certainly their banner year. Still, this feels like something Blue Note passed on -- not off by much, but Shorter doesn't shake off Morgan's solos, and the closer never quite engages. [8]

Art Blakey and the Afro-Drum Ensemble: *The African Beat* (1962, Blue Note) The dominant drum, of course, is still Blakey's. And the other notable voices are two American ringers with Islamic names, bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik and multireedist Yusef Lateef. By contrast the Africans are scattered and relatively tame. But there's nothing really wrong with the experiment, and Blakey and Lateef, in particular, are having a good day. [+]

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers: *Caravan* (1962, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -07): One of Bu's greatest bands -- Freddie Hubbard, Wayne Shorter, Curtis Fuller, Cedar Walton, Reggie Workman

-- but a rather sloppy and indifferent set, perhaps thrown off by the ill-fitting title track; still, Hubbard, who recorded his own *Caravan* on Impulse, makes a game showing. [5]

Art Blakey: *A Jazz Message* (1963, Impulse) How quickly they fall: down to a Quartet, but Sonny Stitt is blazing out of the box, McCoy Tyner takes his blues to another level, and standards as standard as "Summertime" and "The Song Is You" are exceptional. [9]

Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers: *Ugetsu* (1963, Riverside/OJC -11) Live at Birdland, with one of Blakey's strongest lineups: Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Curtis Fuller, Cedar Walton, and Reggie Workman, stretched out on CD from 6 to 10 tracks; lots of energy, but the sound could be clearer, and they ramble a bit. [7]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *Free for All* (1964, Blue Note) Three parts as intense as Blakey ever got (which is saying something), the fourth a light latin thing which Freddie Hubbard aces. [+]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *Indestructible* (1964, Blue Note -87) Toward the end of Blakey's superb string with Blue Note, the lineup here: Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller, Wayne Shorter, Cedar Walton, Reggie Workman. That's still a really primo lineup. Shorter wrote two pieces, Fuller two more, Morgan and Walton one each. Hard bop, of course, although Walton's "When Love Is New" is a gorgeous ballad, with a lovely solo by Shorter. [9]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *'S Make It* (1964, Verve -04) Cut loose from Blue Note after an incredible ten year run, this coasts a bit; new find John Hicks contributes a waltz and a ballad, but isn't hard bop spoiled to be hard? [5]

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers: *Soul Finger* (1965, Verve -09) His run tripped up when he left Blue Note in 1964, but here he gets one more album out of Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard, adds Lucky Thompson, and shows his usual eye for talent in a young pianist named John Hicks; even wrote a song, something with a little Latin tinge. [7]

Art Blakey and the Giants of Jazz: *Live at the 1972 Monterey Jazz Festival* (1972, MJF -08) Not a happy period in the drummer's career, but he plays with great physicality here, leading a ragtag crew of superstars in what could pass as a Jazz at the Philharmonic blowout; Roy Eldridge, Clark Terry, Sonny Stitt, and Kai Winding are natural jousting who offers great excitement but no surprises; the mystery is left to the troubled pianist in one of his last performances, but Thelonious Monk comps engagingly and takes a nice feature on "Round Midnight." [+]

Art Blakey: *Ken Burns Jazz* (1954-81, Verve -00) Long before I knew better I managed to come up with the opinion that everything Art Blakey touches sounds just fine, while none of his records are likely to be flat-out astonishing. Pretty good first approximation, it turns out, although it's also true that Blakey had established himself as perhaps the greatest of all jazz drummers even before he formed the Jazz Messengers and started his program "to keep the mind active" by cultivating young players. This not-quite-career-spanning collection does cover a lot of bases, ranging from Clifford Brown to Bobby Watson, with rampaging be-bop, funky hard-bop, and a dash of Monk in between. One of the best entries in an easy but uneven series. [10]

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *The Sesjun Radio Shows* (1978-83, T2 Entertainment 2CD -11) The second in a series of radio shots from Tros Sesjun in the Netherlands -- Chet Baker came out first, last year. Blakey was one of the three drummers who put bebop on the map (Kenny Clarke and Max Roach were the others), the first guy who figured out how to play with Thelonious Monk, and the

inventor of hard bop -- all but synonymous with Blakey's 1953-66 Jazz Messengers, where he picked up a series of virtually unknown young musicians and turned them into: piano players like Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons, and Wynton Kelly; saxophonists like Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley, and Wayne Shorter; and trumpeters like Kenny Dorham, Lee Morgan, and Freddie Hubbard. He fell on hard times in the late 1960s, but the idea that he could run a finishing school made for a comeback that peaked in 1980 when he tutored two young Marsalis brothers. These three sets bracket the Marsalis Messengers; they're not in any of the lineups, but Bobby Watson and Donald Harrison play alto; David Schnitter, Billy Pierce, and Jean Toussaint tenor; Valery Ponomarev and Terence Blanchard trumpet. The hardest boppers are in the mid-1980 group (Pierce, Watson, and Ponomarev, with James Williams on piano and Charles Fambrough on bass), their set spread across the two discs, and Blakey responds as usual, playing even harder. [7]

Terence Blanchard

Terence Blanchard: *The Billie Holiday Songbook* (1993, Columbia -94) Ugh! Strings! I bought this thinking it might provide a point of comparison to James Carter's *Gardenias for Lady Day*, but the first aperçu seems to be that maybe Columbia writes the requirement for a Holiday tribute into their standard jazz contract. The strings are not credited, at least on the back cover. Five cuts have vocals by Jeanie Bryson, who isn't the second coming of Billie Holiday, but she's an agreeable enough fill-in -- sort of has the small voice, but she's sweeter, and of course doesn't have the heavy phrasing (who else does?). Unlike Carter's record, this one at least sticks to the songbook. Like Carter's record, that includes "Strange Fruit" -- done dirgelike with mostly spoken vocal. Blanchard is a fine trumpeter, and his arranging skills are normally superb. But I really don't get why otherwise intelligent people insist on doing her up in strings. Unless I missed something, Holiday's only association with strings was the embalming job of *Lady in Satin*, a really terrible album. [4]

Terence Blanchard: *Wandering Moon* (1999, Sony Classical -00) After maybe five plays I still find this too inscrutable to say anything substantial about. It is lovely in a rather transparent way, something that every time I play it just slips into the background. So take this with a grain of salt. [+]

Carla Bley

The Carla Bley Band: *Musique Mechanique* (1978, Watt -79) The title piece here is broken into three movements, each marked by a striking mechanicalism in the movement: the rhythm lurches in small, sharp locksteps, while there is much huffing and puffing -- notably from the lower reaches of the bass section, especially Bob Stewart's tuba. Roswell Rudd sings during the middle movement, with a similar mechanical thrust. And Karen Mantler's glockenspiel adds something to the final movement. The two other pieces are less distinctive, and less obviously humorous, and for that matter less obviously interesting. [5]

Carla Bley: *Rarum XV: Selected Recordings* (1961-99, ECM -04) Working backwards, listen as she regains her impish sense of humor while losing her intricate command of big band dynamics, finally arriving at the point where she fed her then-husband a tune and let him play the piano. [+]

Paul Bley

Paul Bley Quintet: *Barrage* (1964, ESP-Disk -65) Pianist, had a famous quintet c. 1958 until Ornette Coleman decided to go pianoless; here the horns belong to Marshall Allen (of Sun Ra fame) and Dewey Johnson (of no fame that I'm aware of), with Eddie Gomez on bass and Milford Graves hitting things; the result is a stand-off, although both Allen and Bley do interesting things when the other lays out. [7]

Paul Bley: *Closer* (1965, ESP-Disk -08) A piano trio with Steve Swallow and Barry Altschul, delightfully light and jaunty, owing no doubt to the writing of past and future wives, Carla Bley and Annette Peacock. [9]

Paul Bley: *Improvisie* (1971, Free America/Verve -05) Bley sloughs off his strong suit by limiting himself to electric keybs, and then-wife Annette Peacock adds to the synthetic estrangement by doubling on electronics and singing a bit; still, it's interesting in its own right, and Han Bennink's percussions are remarkable. [+]

Paul Bley/Jimmy Giuffre/Steve Swallow: *The Life of a Trio: Saturday* (1989, Owl) This music isn't difficult so much as it just takes patience: it seems in fact unnaturally slow, but it's also spacious, with Bley and Giuffre feeling their way around vast spaces with nothing particularly memorable to mark their way. [+]

Hamiet Bluiett

Hamiet Bluiett & Concept: *Live at Carlos I: Another Night* (1986, Just a Memory) I'm working backwards here -- according to the *Penguin Guide*, the first night's the keeper. But this is pretty incisive music, and while the piano player doesn't quite knock you on your ass, he still reminds you that he's Don Pullen. [+]

Hamiet Bluiett: . . . *If You Have to Ask . . . You Don't Need to Know* (1991, Tutu) With Fred Hopkins (bass), Michael Carvin (drums), Okyerema Asante (percussion, vocals, 4 tracks), Thomas Ebow Ansah (guitar, lead vocals, 1 track). The two Africans don't add much, but the trio has a good sense of their Africanism -- particularly Carvin, but Hopkins is typically first rate too. Love the sound of Bluiett's baritone, too, although the more open sound must be coming from his alto flute. [+]

Arthur Blythe

Arthur Blythe & David Eyges: *Today's Blues* (1997, CIMP) Last time around (*Synergy*) they had a drummer, which helped things move along. These duets are slow, ambling affairs, and Eyges' cello is mixed so low I have trouble hearing it. Sounds like Blythe has the same problem. [4]

Willie Bobo

Willie Bobo: *Bobo Motion* (1967, Verve -08) Add a little clave to insipid pop tunes like "Up, Up & Away" and you get . . . well, insipid pop cha-chas; the Neal Hefti and Joe Tex tunes are better, but the vocals sound like watered-down Santana, not that he/they could sing either. [4]

Lucille Bogan

Shave 'Em Dry: The Best of Lucille Bogan (1933-35, Columbia/Legacy -04) The "classic female blues" singers of the '20s were a tough bunch, but none more so than Lucille Bogan. Nor more brazen: her double entendres rarely got slier than an invitation to shop at her Piggly Wiggly, and there was no double at all to the jaw droppingly explicit porn on the the unissued versions of "Shave 'Em Dry" and "Till the Cows Come Home." [9]

Claude Bolling

Claude Bolling/Maurice André: *Toot Suite* (1981, CBS) Guy Pedersen (bass) and Daniel Humair (drums) are a real jazz rhythm section, but Bolling is really a light classicist who happens to be fond of Ellington and Hines, and André is nothing more than a trumpet player who crawled out of a symphony orchestra. The combination, and the score, raises my anti-classical hackles. Not awful -- it usually takes a violin section to make classical music awful, at least for me -- but not something I ever care to hear again, either. [3]

Luiz Bonfa

Luiz Bonfá: *Solo in Rio 1959* (1959, Smithsonian/Folkways -05) An early solo outing by one of the key figures in Brazilian guitar; mostly lightly sketched originals, a quick course in samba, but his style becomes clearer on his covers, which lean towards Cole Porter; this is much expanded from the original LP, picking up cuts with vocals, something he is not famous for. [7]

Luiz Bonfá: *¡Amor! The Fabulous Guitar of Luiz Bonfá* (1959, Collectables -01) An old album by one of Brazil's master guitarists, mostly solo, with a few songs adding percussion, vibes, and/or flute. It hardly picks up a groove, but the delicate picking mesmerizes. Makes me want to hear a true solo album. [+]

Luiz Bonfa: *Composer of Black Orpheus Plays and Sings Bossa Nova* (1962, Verve -08): Most of the title is small print, so could just be *Bossa Nova*; he plays guitar better than he sings, and the best things here are just guitar with a bit of percussion; the strings don't help. [7]

Luiz Bonfa: *The Brazilian Scene* (1965, Verve -08) One of Brazil's major guitarist-composers, but wrapped up in strings and produced so lazily it's hard to tell. [4]

Luiz Bonfa & Maria Toledo: *Braziliana* (1965, Verve -08) Husband-and-wife do bossa nova, soft and seductive, of course, the guitarist even more so than the singer, not a major figure in her own right. [7]

Joe Bonner

Joseph Bonner: *Triangle* (1975, Why Not -09) Known as Joe on his other records, a postbop pianist who combines the relentless flow of a McCoy Tyner with the compositional edge of an Andrew Hill; with Clint Houston on bass and Billy Hart on drums, a quick, smart set, like so many of his records sheltered on an obscure label. [8]

Jean-Paul Bourelly

Jean-Paul Bourelly & the Blu-Wave Bandits: *Rock the Cathartic Spirits: Vibe Music and the Blues!* (1997, Koch) Like James Blood Ulmer, or for that matter like his other avatar, Jimi Hendrix, Bourelly is a prodigious guitarist with a weak sense for vocals. [5]

Lester Bowie

Lester Bowie: *American Gumbo* (1974-75, 32 Jazz -2CD -99) The most accessible avant-garde plays on well-worn standards, which give you a stable background against which all the mischief plays. A good example of this is "St. Louis Blues (Chicago Style)" here. These two albums were originally called *Fast Last!* and *Rope-a-Dope*, but *American Gumbo* sums them up nicely: something down home but spicy. Bowie built his career out of such jokes, which got even better as the background got riper, in *Serious Fun* and *My Way* and (especially) *The Fire This Time*. [+]

Joanne Brackeen

Joanne Brackeen: *Take a Chance* (1993, Concord Picante -94) With Eddie Gomez (bass), Duduka da Fonesco (drums), and Waltinho Anastacio (percussion and a vocal). Most of the songs are Brazilian (Jobim, Nascimento, Egberto Gismonti, Ivan Lins), with three originals clustered near the end. It also slows down and unwinds a bit there, but in general she's a flashy pianist, and the accompaniment keeps the rhythm going. Nice record. [+]

Joanne Brackeen Trio: *Power Talk* (1994, Turnipseed Music) With Ira Coleman and Tony Reedus. She's playing fast. Really fast. [+]

Ruby Braff

Ruby Braff: *Hi-Fi Salute to Bunny* (1957, RCA) A tribute to 1930s trumpeter Bunny Berigan with clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianist Nat Pierce, and others, bright, richly toned, a latter-day swing classic; reissued on CD in 2007 by Mosaic Select, and now dumped out digital-only. [9]

The Ruby Braff Trio: *Bravura Eloquence* (1988, Concord) A trio, with guitarist Howard Alden's saccharine comping behind Braff's eloquent cornet, and bassist Jack Lesberg adding next to nothing on the bottom, this slides by barely managing to tickle the consciousness. [5]

Ruby Braff: *Controlled Nonchalance: At the Regattabar, Volume 2* (1993, Arbors -05) Archival material, left over for the usual reason -- they had better stuff to release at the time. The band includes Scott Hamilton and Dave McKenna, but you wouldn't know without looking at the booklet. Guitarist Gray Sargent fairs better, and Braff sounds fine, even if more controlled than nonchalant. We miss him. [5]

Anthony Braxton

Anthony Braxton: *Three Compositions of New Jazz* (1968, Delmark -91) This is one of Braxton's first recorded works. Two of the compositions have the sort of diagrammatic titles like he used back then; the third is called "The Bell." The other musicians are Leroy Jenkins, Leo Smith, and Muhal

Richard Abrams. All four players were quite young at the time, with Abrams being the only one who was even moderately established. All four players play their usual instruments plus lots more -- with all but Abrams dabbling in what little percussion there is -- bells and bottles, xylophone. The instrument switches have a candy store feel to them -- musette and mellophone, harmonica and kazoo, little snatches of sound inserted into an open-ended tableau. All this farting around doesn't amount to much, but the solo work embedded in this matrix is often first rate -- particularly Smith. I don't think this quite works, but over the next decade Braxton did get similar strategies to pay big dividends. And this glimpse back into the formative years of such major players is worth pondering. [5]

Anthony Braxton: *Donna Lee* (1972, Free America/Verve -05) Starts with slurred speed-bop, then a patient, open-ended abstract exploration, then two takes on "You Go to My Head" and another original; an early quartet with Michael Smith on piano, a major talent working out fragments of his kit. [+]

Anthony Braxton: *Saxophone Improvisations Series F* (1972, Free America/Verve 2CD -05) Solo alto saxophone, many series of practice runs work out almost minimalist variations, for the most part lighter and less intense than his *For Alto* breakout from 1968. [+]

Anthony Braxton: *New York, Fall 1974* (1974, Arista) Split into two sides, one showing how brash and vibrant a state of the art avant quartet -- Kenny Wheeler, Dave Holland, Jerome Cooper -- could be; the other a set of ponderous experiments -- a duet with Moogist Richard Teitelbaum, a sax choir with three-fourths of the future World Saxophone Quartet, a slower quartet plus violinist Leroy Jenkins. [+]

Anthony Braxton: *Five Pieces 1975* (1975, Arista) A breathtaking quartet with Kenny Wheeler, Dave Holland, and Barry Altschul, the rhythm section swinging diagrammatic compositions that might otherwise seem arcane, the leader attacking with his full arsenal of reed instruments; plus a delicate bass-sax duet on "You Stepped Out of a Dream," a reference point, in fact, a song. [9]

Anthony Braxton: *Creative Orchestra Music 1976* (1976, Arista) A tour de force, with his massive orchestra drawing explicitly on Sousa-like marching band brouhaha, which he slices up and reconstructs, then checking off Basie, Ellington, maybe Mingus and Russell too, while breaking new ground in every direction; full of delightful details, there's little doubt that Braxton is in complete command. [10]

Anthony Braxton/Muhai Richard Abrams: *Duets 1976* (1976, Arista) First item in Braxton's discography was on Abrams' *Levels and Degrees of Light* (1967); the AACM's two most cerebral composers working here in an improviser's context, the originals widely scattered in mood and effect, the two covers -- Eric Dolphy's "Miss Ann" and Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" -- explosive with good cheer and startling musicianship. [+]

Anthony Braxton/George Lewis: *Donaueschingen (Duo) 1976* (1976, Hat Art -94) Two duets, one a long piece written by trombonist Lewis, the other a short take of Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee." Both artists went on to record notable tributes to Bird. This one's an interesting album; doesn't jump out at you, but repays listening. [+]

Anthony Braxton: *Dortmund (Quartet) 1976* (1976, Hat Art) Four pieces with diagrammatic titles, performed live by a rather extraordinary quartet, with trombonist George Lewis joining Braxton up front, with Dave Holland and Barry Altschul in the back. Braxton plays flute and clarinet as well as three weights of sax (soprano, alto, contrabass), which gives him a wide range of looks. Impressive work all around. [9]

Anthony Braxton: *For Trio* (1977, Arista) Concept art at its most systematic: one piece, "Opus 76," performed by two trios, each filling an album side; all players -- Henry Threadgill and Douglas Ewart on side 1, Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman on side 2, Braxton on both -- play the same range of wind and percussion instruments, in a meticulously laid out cycle of pick something/do something; the sounds make little sense, but the liner notes are brilliant. [5]

Anthony Braxton: *The Montreux/Berlin Concerts* (1975-76, Arista 2LP) Two quartets, Braxton's most accessible format: 3 cuts (29:22) from Montreux with trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, 4 cuts (57:21) from Berlin with trombonist George Lewis, a rare treat to hear him cut loose at such length. [9]

Anthony Braxton: *Alto Saxophone Improvisations* 1979 (1978-79, Arista 2LP) Solo alto sax, a little like masturbation -- always a greater pleasure for the doer than for the observer -- and a lot like practice; Braxton was notorious for his first solo album, 1968's *For Alto*, which I long regarded as the ugliest thing I ever heard but others regard as a landmark; this is more balanced, plumbing every nook and cranny of the instrument, cycling through moves that would grow up to become themes. [+]

Anthony Braxton: *For Four Orchestras* (1978, Arista 3LP) An extravaganza, with four 39-piece orchestras recruited on the cheap at Oberlin College; given all the firepower, the results are relatively mild, the sort of post-classical abstractions that now seem to be part of the times then; listen continuously on 2-CD, as opposed to flipping the original 6 LP sides, and it just flows amiably in the background, never uninteresting. [+]

Anthony Braxton: *For Two Pianos* (1980, Arista) One of those things he does -- in 2008 Leo Records came out with a career-summing 9-CD set called *Piano Music (1968-2000)*, played not by Braxton but by Geneviève Focroulle; Braxton doesn't play here either, although he could certainly handle the zither and melodica diversions; rather, he uses two of the period's finest avant-classical pianists, Frederic Rzewski and Ursula Oppens, who crawl over his dense, 49:28 script with remarkable steadiness and grace. [9]

Anthony Braxton: *The Complete Arista Recordings of Anthony Braxton* (1974-79, Mosaic 8CD -08) Typical Mosaic packaging: LP-sized box/booklet, four jewel cases with two discs each, packed so the albums overlap discs, but not jarringly; no alt-takes, nothing previously unreleased, but this pathbreaking jazz has been out of print so long it's reassuring to have it all in one safe place. [9]

Anthony Braxton/Marilyn Crispell: *Duets: Vancouver 1989* (1989, Music & Arts -90) Half of Braxton's remarkable 1984-93 quartet, strip the rhythm off and he slips into his solo abstractions, which she not just props up but muscles around. [8]

Anthony Braxton: *Charlie Parker Project 1993* (1993, Hatology 2CD) No one ever played Parker's songbook faster or with more fervor, not even Bird. [9]

Anthony Braxton/Joe Fonda: *Duets 1995* (1995, Clean Feed -07) Elemental free jazz interplay, just Fonda's bass circled by Braxton's saxophones or clarinets; measured, thoughtful, too carefully planned and executed to be pure improv, but rarely what you expected. [8]

Lenny Breau

Lenny Breau/Don Francks/Eon Henstridge: *At the Purple Onion* (1962, Art of Life -04) Francks is a singer who sounds like he learned his craft at the feet of Lenny Bruce. His "A Gentle Sings the

Blues" is way over the top, while "A New Electric Chair" is mostly monologue. Given this, you can imagine how puerile "Tea for Two" sounds. Breau is a guitarist who died too young. He has a reputation but I've never managed to sort him out. He plays a bit here; sounds interesting when he does. Joey Hollingsworth joints for the last three cuts, starting with "Work Song." He tap dances, which given the lyric turns this back into a minstrel show. [3]

Willem Breuker

Willem Breuker Kollektief: *Live in Berlin* (1975, FMP) Close to the beginning of what came to be called New Dutch Swing, Breuker played various saxes and clarinets, his Kollektief an 11-piece band that played classical, swing, and avant-garde with uncommon whimsy and an emphasis on the surreal; just how much whimsy isn't totally clear until they knock off a pop song ("Our Day Will Come"), but even the mock-classical "La Plagiata" is strung with laughs. [9]

Willem Breuker & Leo Cuypers: . . . *Superstars* (1978, FMP) Of the Dutch avant-garde, anyway, usually heard in larger conflagrations, but just the two of them here, Breuker on various saxes and clarinets, Cuypers piano; not intimate, nor even much of a duo, the two mostly switching off like tag team wrestlers, Breuker often reaching not for the right note but the funny one, and playing two saxes simultaneously on his "Kirk" tribute. [8]

Alan Broadbent

Alan Broadbent: *Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Volume Fourteen* (1991, Concord) They may be the ideal way to listen to Broadbent: solo. He works through a couple of originals and a wide range of standards, but always seems in complete control, playing with sure-footed elegance. [+]

The Alan Broadbent Trio: *Pacific Standard Time* (1995, Concord) Pianist, from New Zealand, probably best known as part of Charlie Haden's Quartet West, with a very nice mainstream piano trio from an era when Concord practically cornered the market on mainstream piano jazz; one original, "This One's for Bud," and one by John Lewis plus a long list of songbook standards. [8]

Bob Brookmeyer

Bob Brookmeyer & Friends: *Stan Getz, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Gary Burton, Elvin Jones* (1964, Columbia/Legacy -05) The valve trombonist is, as always, an elegant arranger and a considerate host, but some friends are bigger help than others, and Getz gets top billing for good reason; uncredited on the cover, Tony Bennett sings one song. [+]

Tina Brooks

Tina Brooks: *Minor Move* (1958, Blue Note) His first record, but the last to work its way back in print. Why it took so long is unfathomable: with Lee Morgan, Sonny Clark, and Art Blakey, this is hard bop heaven. [10]

Tina Brooks: *True Blue* (1960, Blue Note -05) A neglected figure: this was the only Brooks album to appear in his lifetime, and was only briefly available on CD as part of Blue Note's limited edition Connoisseur Series; Brooks played hard bop with uncommon eloquence and grace at all speeds; he's

joined here by Freddie Hubbard, young and dazzling. [9]

Tina Brooks: *The Waiting Game* (1961, Blue Note -02) A tenor saxophonist, led four sessions for Blue Note 1958-61 in a career that ended even before his death at age 42; this was the last, shelved until 1999 when it appeared in Japan; quintet with Johnny Coles (trumpet), Kenny Drew (piano), Wilbur Ware and Philly Joe Jones -- for anyone else this would be an eye-opener, but every album Brooks cut (at least for Blue Note) cooks like this. [9]

Peter Brötzmann

The Peter Brötzmann Octet: *The Complete Machine Gun Sessions* (1968, Atavistic -07) Roughly speaking, this is where Europe's jazz avant-garde takes off, building a tradition rooted in brutal cacophony, disjointed rhythm, and cartoonish irreverence. The three saxophonists went on to major careers: Evan Parker, Willem Breuker, and Brötzmann. They turn these long pieces into free fire zones, blaring in unison siren wails, splitting off to scratch through the dirt and the rubble. Two bassists: Peter Kowald and Buschi Niebergall. Two drummers: Han Bennink and Sven-Ake Johansson. One pianist: Fred Van Hove. Each has his own mind, but the piano is especially worth tracking. Original LP ran 37:08. CD reissue added two alternate takes, and now this edition adds a third take of the title piece, done live with extra saxophonist Gerd Dudek. Still fits on one CD, but it's an awful lot to sit through. [7]

Peter Brötzmann Group: *Fuck de Boere: Dedicated to Johnny Dyani* (1968-70, Atavistic -01) Two sprawling pieces: a version of "Machine Gun," the big bang of European free jazz, and the title piece, named for South African bassist Dyani's considered opinion of those who then ran his homeland. [5]

Peter Brötzmann/Fred Van Hove/Han Bennink Plus Albert Mangelsdorff: *Live in Berlin '71* (1971, FMP 2CD) The tenor sax and trombone blister and bluster but at least back off part on occasion to let something develop; Bennink is credited with a long list of percussion including the catchall "home-made junk"; he dazzles on his own, as does pianist Van Hove when the thunder breaks; even the noise can be wondrous for a while, but it does go on too long. [7]

Peter Brötzmann/Fred Van Hove/Han Bennink: *FMP 130* (1973, Atavistic -03) Little bits are amusing, as when Van Hove breaks into a little boogie woogie, which Bennink then tears to shreds, but the norm here is chaos amplified by fire and fury. [5]

Peter Brötzmann/Han Bennink: *Schwarzwaldfahrt* (1977, Atavistic -2CD -05) A picnic in the Black Forest -- "fahrt" means "trip," not what it sounds like -- with the former's reeds, a little viola and banjo, and whatever percussion the latter could conjure up by attacking nature; interesting as concept and process, for its occasional surprises. [5]

Peter Brötzmann/Misha Mengelberg/Han Bennink: *3 Points and a Mountain . . . Plus* (1979, FMP 2CD -99) Carefully balanced, with each player writing three songs, much space for the piano without Brötzmann blowing it out of the water, and as wide a range of sax and clarinet as you're likely to find -- although note that at least some of the tenor sax and clarinet is Bennink; a lot of fascinating bits, but a long haul to put them all together. [8]

Peter Brötzmann Group: *Alarm* (1981, Atavistic -06) A radio shot from an exceptional nine-piece band of troublemakers, cut short by a bomb threat. The two-part title piece is punctuated by siren blasts, clipped down so firmly they hardly rise above the saxophones (Brötzmann, Willem Breuker,

Frank Wright) and brass (Toshinori Kondo, Hannes Bauer, Alan Tomlinson). While the noise level is a couple notches below *Machine Gun*, the rhythm section flourishes: South Africans Harry Miller and Louis Moholo keep it all moving, while Alexander von Schlippenbach's piano crashes against the waves. Wright sings a bit at the end, giving the whole thing a revival flair. [8]

Peter Brötzmann/Albert Mangelsdorff/Günter Sommer: *Pica Pica* (1982, Atavistic -06) Mangelsdorff was the first major figure in European avant-jazz, an astonishing trombonist; Brötzmann was a younger fire-breathing saxophonist; the trio with drums is full of give and take, an exchange of generations and complexities. [6]

Brötzmann Clarinet Project: *Berlin Jungle* (1984, Atavistic -04) *Machine Gun* with silencers, the clarinets' softer tones muffle the usual squall, making it easier to parse the music. [+]

Peter Brötzmann: *14 Love Poems (Plus 10 More)* (1984, FMP -04) Solo exercises on a range of saxophones and clarinets including a taste of tarogato, all improv except for a bit of "Lonely Woman," mostly modest in tone and dynamics although not without the occasional jarring squelch; anyone serious about Brötzmann might find this a useful lens, as most of his kit is here, in manageable portions. [6]

Peter Brötzmann: *Die Like a Dog* (1993, FMP) A founding figure in the European avant-garde, in my own limited experience I've rarely found him to be coherent. But this isn't bad: a meditation on Albert Ayler, which brings out the primitive in Brötzmann. Still, only the last cut raises the temperature. [5]

Peter Brötzmann/Hamid Drake Duo: *The Dried Rat-Dog* (1994, Okkadisk -95) Drake's drum solos are not only welcome relief from Brötzmann, they're downright enjoyable. Brötzmann, of course, can peel paint. [5]

Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet: *Stone/Water* (1999, Okkadisk -00) The first meeting of this group in 1997 netted three CDs in what seemed like a one-shot effort. However, after Ken Vandermark won the MacArthur Prize, he invested a good chunk of change in getting the group back together and taking them on the road. This CD, with one untitled piece that is either short or long at 38:44, was the first result. Two more came out in 2002, and two more in 2004. This seques through several movements, punctuated with blasts of the sax section. Fred Lonborg-Holm's violin figures large in the early going, and there's some fine interplay between clarinet and bass, but most of the action centers around the saxes, and the energy level is palpable. I don't mind the shortness. This is stimulation enough. [+]

Anthony Brown

Asian American Jazz Orchestra: *Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire* (1998, Asian Improv) This is drummer Anthony Brown's orchestra, which attempts to bridge between east Asian musical ideas and jazz (not sure how specific the Asian; Brown is half-Japanese, but the orchestra also includes Jon Jang, who is Chinese-American, and a major figure in Asian jazz fusion in his own right). The title comes from the sequence "Last Dance," which is a set of big band swing pieces narrated in the framework of the WWII camps where the US detained Japanese-Americans lest they be a subversive force -- the irony is the musicians' love of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, "and a little Basie." The other pieces will take more work to figure out, but they're interesting and pleasing exotics. [9]

Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra: *Far East Suite* (1999, Asian Improv) The idea here is to transplant *Far East Suite* back to the far east, adding some distinctive Asian instruments -- Brown

(gong), Mark Izu (Chinese mouth organ), Qi Chao Liu (Chinese mouth organ, reed trumpet, bamboo flutes), Hafez Modirzadeh (Persian end-blown flute [ney], double reed instruments and frame drum) -- to a conventionally largish band: Brown (drums), Louis Fasman (trumpet, fluegelhorn), Izu (bass), Jon Jang (piano), Melecio Magdaluyo (alto/baritone sax), Dave Martell (trombone), Modirzadeh (tenor/alto sax, alto clarinet), Jim Norton (clarinet, alto/baritone sax, bassoon, piccolo), Wayne Wallace (trombone), Francis Wong (tenor sax, flute, clarinet), John Worley (trumpet, fluegelhorn). Along the way they stretch Ellington's 45-minute suite up to 62:22. Aside from the stretch and minor alterations of tone, this follows the original rather closely -- although Worley's trumpet on "Amad" doesn't sound anything like Cat Anderson, and Brown finishes that piece with a first rate drum solo. "Ad Lib on Nippon" is bigger than ever, and sometimes the music is so magnificent I come close to being convinced. But I miss the sleek, lean lines of the original, for whatever they may have lacked in local color they made up for in pure Ellingtonia. [+]

Clifford Brown

Clifford Brown: *The Complete Paris Sessions Vol. 1* (1953, BMG/Vogue -97) Two sessions from Sept. 28-29, 1953: the first with a large band called Gigi Gryce and His Orchestra, the second with the smaller Gigi Gryce-Clifford Brown Sextet. Four of the cuts come with alternate takes; three without. The big band is six deep in trumpets, but presumably most of the leads come from Brown, with Art Farmer coming in second. It seems like the first cut starts with uncredited strings, but that clears up soon. Good, solid work from Gryce and Brown, and Jimmy Gourley adds some nice guitar for a couple of the sextet cuts. Main reservations are that it feels a little ad hoc for big band, a little cluttered for small group, and a little archival for all the alternate takes. Impressive nonetheless. [+]

Clifford Brown *With Strings* (1955, Emarcy -97) The strings are yucky, of course. (Although you could do worse than Neil Hefti.) The trumpet is magnificent, also of course. Sentimentalists love this record, and it's hard to begrudge them. Myself, I find it soporific. [+]

Clifford Brown: *The Beginning and the End* (1952-56, Columbia -73) Trumpet player, dead in a car crash at age 25 after a four-year run that rivals any debut in jazz history. The two cuts with Jamaican singer Chris Powell make little use of Brown and would be long forgotten but for the title concept. The rest -- 3 tracks, 29:53 of the total 34:22 -- were captured live the day before the crash, and are little short of sensational. [8]

James Brown

James Brown: *Gettin' Down to It* (1968-69, Verve -05) Like the slightly later *Soul on Top*, this is a big band album of Brown singing and grunting his way through standards. I was blown away by the later album, judging it on par with another soul singer who scored with big band workouts of standards: Ray Charles. But this record reminds us that such magic depends not only on the singer and the band, but also on the song. *Soul on Top's* songs were solid: "That's My Desire," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "It's Magic," "September Song," "For Once in My Life," "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," like that, plus two of his own signatures. But the songs on this album fit so poorly that one wonders whether they weren't done tongue-in-cheek: "Sunny," "That's Life," "Strangers in the Night," "Willow Weep for Me." That's just the first four; after he gives us a break with "Cold Sweat," he dives back into his Sinatra records -- "Chicago," "For Sentimental Reasons," "Time After Time," "All the Way," "It Had to Be You." First

time through, this seemed like a sure shot for the Duds list. Now I'm not so sure: play it enough and even corn like this turns sweet. [5]

Lawrence Brown

Lawrence Brown: *Slide Trombone* (1955, Verve -99) A lovely showcase for Ellington's bone man. [+]

Marion Brown

Saxophonist, alto first but played a lot of soprano, cut his remarkable early albums for ESP-Disk in the mid-1960s, but rarely had a steady label -- one Impulse in 1966, one ECM in 1970, two Impulses, everything else on minor foreign labels up to his death in 2010, with some of his best records duos with Mal Waldron.

Marion Brown (1965, ESP-Disk -05) Brown's first, his alto sax razor sharp and brimming with melodic ideas, with drummer Rashied Ali stirring things up; this reissue finally reconciles all the confusing errors in previous editions -- it's all here, remastered, the debut of an important but still little known avant-gardist. [9]

Marion Brown: *Porto Novo* (1967-70, Black Lion -94) Alto saxophonist, a fierce avant-gardist working in a trio with Maarten van Regteren Altena on bass and Han Bennink on drums, the 11:55 title cut a highlight, especially for the drummer; CD adds two later (1970) duo tracks with trumpeter Leo Smith, both filling in on percussion so the horns rarely interact. [8]

Marion Brown: *Geechee Recollections* (1973, Impulse) Wrapped around a piece of poetry by Jean Toomer (spoken by Bill Hasson), an understated piece of chopped and clipped rhythm, rarely drawing out the leader's sax or whatever it is Leo Smith allegedly does. [7]

Marion Brown: *Sweet Earth Flying* (1974, Impulse) Two side-long pieces, one centered around another Jean Toomer poem, with a twin-piano (sometimes electric, or organ) lineup -- Muhal Richard Abrams and Paul Bley, no less -- and Steve McCall (again) on drums, but more focus on the sax, the soprano especially striking. [8]

Mel Brown

Blues guitarist, best known for working with Bobby "Blue" Bland. Teamed with Herb Ellis for a soul jazz album in 1967 called *Chicken Fat*, and that got him a couple more shots.

Mel Brown: *The Wizard* (1968, Impulse) Second guitarist here was Terry Evans, but they rarely do anything interesting enough to keep you from wondering when will the singer show up. Organist is so indistinct the label didn't bother to give the credit. [4]

Mel Brown: *Blues for We* (1969, Impulse) Even fewer credits here, although the singer on "Twist and Shout" is reported to be Brown himself -- a mistake he doesn't repeat. Chintzy pop like "Ob-La-Dee, Ob-La-Da" even more rote than its predecessor, although eventually you become enured to such things. [3]

Norman Brown

Norman Brown: *Just Between Us* (1992, Verve -08) Smooth jazz guitarist, first album, sticks to basics with modish post-disco grooves, occasional bits of vocals so slight they do little harm. [5]

Rob Brown

Rob Brown Trio (With William Parker and Jackson Krall): *High Wire* (1993, Soul Note -96) Brown plays alto saxophone, with beautiful tone on his one little ballad here, and forceful dynamics on the real high wire avant-garde shit. I've run across him a couple of times before in Parker's In Order to Survive band, which has produced a couple of amazing albums. This is his first album in his own name, working his own compositions. Very solid work. [+]

Dave Brubeck

Dave Brubeck: *Jazz Goes to College* (1954, Columbia) Live cuts from a tour of midwestern colleges, following the previous year's breakthrough *Jazz at Oberlin*, this one just a bit more scattered. Paul Desmond gets his picture (but not his name) on the cover, and plays his usual pivotal role. [8]

Dave Brubeck: *Time Out* (1959, Columbia/Legacy -09) [10]

Dave Brubeck: *Time Out [Legacy Edition]* (1959-64, Columbia/Legacy 2CD -09) Every song in a different time signature -- the sort of neat trick an egghead like Brubeck with the degree to back it up might do. The big surprise is how little notice you'd give to the concept, for the simple reason that the pieces seem so organic and complete. "Take Five" sounded so timeless it broke through the charts and sold over a million copies. Brubeck's popularity, like Keith Jarrett's a couple decades later, always seemed a bit excessive: not undeserved, just not fairly distributed. But you couldn't charge his group with selling out or pandering. Maybe you'd complain that Paul Desmond played the most simply gorgeous alto saxophone since Johnny Hodges, but that sounds more like a compliment. *Time Out's* success encouraged sequels -- the five discs collected in *For All Time* hold up pretty well (especially *Time Further Out*). A best-of might have made good filler for the second disc, but Legacy opted instead to plunder the previously unreleased live archives instead, picking from 1961, 1963, and 1964 sets at Newport. Mostly standard in the usual time -- "St. Louis Blues," "Pennies From Heaven," "You Go to My Head" -- they showcase a superb group fleet on their toes. Closes with slightly stretched versions of their two best-known *Time Out* classics, tying the package up neatly. [9]

The Dave Brubeck Quartet: *Last Time Out: December 26, 1967* (1967, Columbia/Legacy -2CD -11) Unofficial tape, probably off the soundboard, found in a closet and dusted off. Brubeck had announced his brief retirement to start at the end of 1967, but in most regards this just extended the hundred-plus concerts the Quartet had given during the year. A long running, immensely popular group, With Paul Desmond, the alto saxophonist who had given the Quartet its signature sound since 1951, drummer Joe Morello and bassist Eugene Wright, who had joined in 1956 and 1958 respectively. Lots of interesting stuff, ending in a "Take Five" that leaps right off the stage. [8]

Dave Brubeck: *Ken Burns Jazz* (1953-91, Columbia/Legacy -00) Like most of this series, this hits the major newsworthy points in Brubeck's career, extending slightly beyond Brubeck's central Columbia recordings to include an early *Jazz at Oberlin* cut and a late one (the only post-1974) from *Once When*

I Was Young. The set is longer on range than on consistency, which seems appropriate for the purpose. "Take Five," of course, is an extraordinary piece of music. The piece with Leonard Bernstein struggles with the whole weight of the New York Philharmonic, but comes out with only a few bruises. One piece you don't hear all that much is "The Real Ambassador," which starts sounding like tacky vocalese (courtesy of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross), until its anti-segregation message becomes clear (courtesy of Louis Armstrong). [9]

Lenny Bruce

Lenny Bruce: *Thank You Masked Man* (1958-63, Fantasy -04) Early bits, mostly unreleased, most with extreme voices, including the semitic Lone Ranger and the antisemitic Fat Boy car salesman; mostly of its time, too, but note that the bleeped out four-letter word in "The Sound" (the story of a jazz musician, the funniest thing here) is "Welk." [+]

Lenny Bruce: *Let the Buyer Beware* (1948-66, Shout! Factory -6CD -04) I wonder how many people born after Bruce's death in 1966 have any idea who he was. Can't be many: comics don't have much of a shelf life, especially ones with no TV exposure. Older generations will know the name, even though few actually saw him perform, heard his LPs, or read his book. No, he was famous for getting busted -- 15 times in two years, mostly for saying bad words. Bruce was one of those Jews who adopted a goyische stage name to start his career, then spent nearly every moment on stage reminding you that he was Jewish: he savaged Barry Goldwater for changing his religion instead of his name; he ran through lists of entertainers ("the Mills Brothers were goy; Coleman Hawkins was a Jew; Ben Webster was so Jewish, he was an orthodox Jew"); he poured so much Yiddish into his act the box includes a dictionary. Most of his shtick has dated: even with the biographical notes you had to have lived through Lawrence Welk and the Lone Ranger to get those bits. He barely touches politics -- nothing on Vietnam or Israel, but lots on race and homosexuals and the hypocrisies of the pious and the merely liberal. And by featuring mostly unreleased tapes the box aims to flesh out a portrait that only his devoted fans can fully dig. But excessive and peculiar as it is, those fans fear it may become timely again. America in the '50s was a cloistered society of deeply repressed people, and Bruce sliced through all that, with a mischievous glee and an innocent's faith in simple justice. He didn't live to enjoy the liberation of the '60s, but he had something to do with making it possible -- in death as much as in life. For most of the years since he's just been history, but some bits here do seem to be coming back to life: take his "Religions, Inc." and substitute Jerry Falwell for Oral Roberts, or let him quote Will Rogers again, "I never met a dyke I didn't like." So maybe it is time to resurrect him; after all, Jesus wasn't the only Jew who died for our sins. [9]

Bill Bruford

Bill Bruford: *Feels Good to Me* (1977, Winterfold -05) The prog rock drummer par excellence (Yes, King Crimson, Genesis), like many Bruford eventually gravitated toward jazz; his first solo album is neither fish nor fowl, with Dave Stewart and Allan Holdsworth engaging in light, swishy instrumental rock, while avant-gardist Kenny Wheeler adds a dollop of flugelhorn and vocalist Annette Peacock sings or raps on four tracks; most interesting for Peacock, whose own records (with Bruford drumming) are highly recommended. [5]

Bill Bruford: *One of a Kind* (1979, Winterfold -05) Second album, the group reduced to a quartet --

Holdsworth's guitars, Stewart's keyboards, Jeff Berlin's bass -- for the simple pleasures of prog fusion. [4]

Bill Bruford's *Earthworks* (1986, Summerfold -05) This was Bruford's official debut as a jazz artist, although there are still minor additions of electric keybs and drums, and at least one piece ("Bridge of Inhibition") sounds like it fell off King Crimson's oxcart; Bruford's partners here are Iain Ballamy (saxes) and Django Bates (piano), both notable players in their own right, and acoustic bassist Mick Hutton, with Ballamy and Bates contributing writing; the two bonus cuts are the most pleasing jazz pieces here. [+]

Bill Bruford's *Earthworks: Dig?* (1989, Summerfold -05) New bassist, but the core Bruford-Ballamy-Bates group remains intact, and they've continued to move toward the loose, slinky, semi-avant jazz favored especially by Bates, dropping the prog rock artifacts of Bruford's past -- still some electric keyb, but Bates keeps it interesting, avoiding the usual clichés. [+]

Alex Bugnon

Alex Bugnon: *Head Over Heels* (1990, Orpheus) Swiss keyboard player, of the crossover/smooth jazz variety. Guitarist Keith Robinson is prominent here, and Donald Byrd makes a guest appearance. Also an alto saxophonist named Vincent Henry. This strikes me as a bit florid, especially on the three cuts (one gospelish) where singers fill in, but most of it is agreeably funky. Better than I expected, especially from looking at the cover. [5]

Jane Bunnett

Jane Bunnett and the *Cuban Piano Masters* (1993, World Pacific) The masters are two: Jose Maria Vitier and Frank Emilio Flynn. I've never heard of either, but that's not the real problem here. One problem here is that Bunnett's flute and soprano sax don't add enough to the piano; another is that there's no percussion, just a bass for rhythm. The piano isn't all that stellar either. [4]

Dave Burrell

Dave Burrell: *After Love* (1970, Free America/Verve -05) Alan Silva's cello and violin create a background buzz that quickly moves this music into some other dimension, and Roscoe Mitchell's reeds keep it there, with Burrell's rollicking piano providing the propulsion; second long piece starts with solo fragments before they plug in a beat and pull it back together. [9]

Dave Burrell: *Windward Passages* (1979, Hat Art -94) An avant-gardist, or perhaps just a postmodernist, with deep roots in old jazz forms -- cf. *The Jelly Roll Joys* -- Burrell is on the short list of pianists who can hold my attention and even impart a sense of wonder when I hear them play solo. He recut this work (or at least this title) later as a duo with David Murray, and I may still prefer that version -- no amount of pianistics (at least none short of Don Pullen) can compete with Murray, but this is a delight all the way through. [9]

Kenny Burrell

A Night at the Village Vanguard With the Kenny Burrell Trio (1959, Verve -08) With Richard Davis

and Roy Haynes, a supple, rather quiet set that slowly sneaks up on you, finishing with masterful takes on Ellington and Monk. [6]

Kenny Burrell: *Prestige Profiles* (1956-63, Prestige -05) I still haven't come to grips with Legacy's big guitar box, so perhaps should withhold my generalizations until then. Burrell is one of several second tier guitarists to come out of the bop ferment -- the top tier is Wes Montgomery, and everyone else is arguable (Jim Hall, Tal Farlow, Herb Ellis, Jimmy Raney, Barney Kessel, Mundell Lowe, Grant Green, Joe Pass). The problem here isn't Burrell, whose solos are fluid and imaginative. The problem is Prestige, whose quickie product process did little to help their artists develop. That hardly hurt for artists like Coleman Hawkins, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Lockjaw Davis, Gene Ammons, or others who were already on top of their game. But for Burrell it meant throwing him into the studio with random sets of musicians, including dominant voices like Hawkins and Coltrane. This tries to sort out the mess, latching on to cuts with fine guitar solos, but even selecting for Burrell they're mostly cuts where everyone takes a solo, even the bassists. [6]

Kenny Burrell: *God Bless the Child* (1971, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -10) The guitarist can't quite escape Sebesky's black-tie cello arrangements, but it helps when he accents his blue notes, when Ray Barretto tricks up the rhythm track, and especially when Freddie Hubbard adds a contrasting tone. [6]

Abraham Burton

Abraham Burton: *Closest to the Sun* (1994, Enja) Wow! Burton is a very young (22 or 23 when this, his first album, was cut) alto saxophonist with a vibrant sound and extraordinary dynamics. He studied under Jackie McLean, and it shows. This quartet (Marc Cary, piano; Billy Johnson, bass; Eric McPherson, drums) album has some rough edges, but Burton is so rich and tuneful and vigorous that it's undeniable. The follow-up (see below) is even better, but this is one of the most impressive debuts of the '90s. [9]

Abraham Burton: *The Magician* (1995, Enja) Same quartet as last time: I'm particularly impressed by Marc Cary (piano), but Billy Johnson (bass) and Eric McPherson (drums) do no wrong either. Burton is in extraordinary form here. He has a fine touch on ballads, and he can really let it rip. "Gnossienne #1" is just bursting with intense energy. I bought these two CDs through a cutout vendor, and as far as I know he only has one more since 1995. Not many sideman dates either, although I greatly admire at least two: Dusko Goykovich: *Bebop City* (1995, Enja), and Horace Tapscott, *Aiee! The Phantom* (1995, Arabesque). [10]

Gary Burton

Gary Burton/Chick Corea: *Crystal Silence: The ECM Recordings 1972-79* (1972-79, ECM 4CD -09) Hot on the heels of a 35th anniversary reunion tour documented as *The New Crystal Silence*, ECM repacks the original album along with two subsequent duet performances. I wish I could extoll the original as a legend, but vibes-piano duets offer a limited palette with similar dynamics -- at best (e.g., Milt Jackson and Thelonious Monk) you get an intriguing solo piano record with a cloud of bright accents. Corea's piano is similarly dominant here, especially on the original album, which despite name order Burton's vibes add very little to. Six years later, *Duet* is thicker, with Corea more dramatic and Burton more frenzied -- often too much so. The following year's live album finds both players slipping into their comfort zones. Spread out over two discs (combined length 83:11) they are the most evenly

matched and generally pleasing, although the piano on the first album makes a stronger impression. [6]

John Butcher

John Butcher: *Thirteen Friendly Numbers* (1991, Unsounds -04) Avant jazz saxophonist, plays all types but tenor is his main one, cut these solo but occasionally overdubbed extra sax parts, and used amplifiers so you get some hellacious vibrato; the tunes are not as friendly as he thinks, but he shows you range and depth. [6]

John Butcher: *Music on Seven Occasions* (1996-98, Meniscus) Solo tenor or soprano saxophone, or duos on same with a handful of other musicians -- percussions Gino Robair or Michael Zerang; Alexander Frangenheim (bass), Veryan Weston (piano), Thomas Lehn (analogue synth), John Corbett (guitar), Jeb Bishop (trombone), Terri Kapsalis (violin), Fred Lonberg-Holm (cello). Slow, difficult, screechy. Don't really have the patience for this sort of thing. [4]

Henry Butler

Henry Butler: *Blues & More, Volume I* (1992, Windham Hill) Blind New Orleans pianist, b. 1949, has a dozen or so albums since 1986 but as far as I know no *Volume II* to this one; solo piano, a dense thicket but no sense of the stride or boogie-woogie that drove all the other important New Orleans pianists from Byrd to Booker; mostly originals, but sings a pair of covers, not his strong suit. [6]

Billy Butterfield

Billy Butterfield Joins Andy Bartha: *Take Me to the Land of Jazz* (1969, Delmark -05) Average-plus trad jazz from cornettist Bartha with and without Butterfield, a veteran of Bob Crosby's Bobcats -- standard songbook, so-so vocals, hot brass. [5]

Jaki Byard

Jaki Byard: *Freedom Together!* (1968, Prestige -97) Amateur hour: bassist Richard Davis plays cello, drummer Alan Dawson tries out vibes and tympani, pianist Byard toys with celeste and blows a little tenor sax, Junior Parker sings. [5]

Jaki Byard: *Sunshine of My Soul* (1978, High Note -07) A pianist who could play roots and give it an edge, or play avant and still find his roots -- he reminds us of Mingus with a medley here; this one is solo piano, recorded live at Keystone Korner in San Francisco, a straight, forceful tour of his art. [6]

Jaki Byard: *A Matter of Black and White: Live at the Keystone Korner, Vol. 2* (1978-79, High Note -11) Solo piano, well-worn standards -- "God Bless the Child," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans," "I Know a Place," "Round Midnight," "Day Dream," among others -- bright and touching. [8]

Don Byas

Don Byas: *Complete American Small Group Recordings* (1944-46, Definitive -4CD -01) Just starting

to cruise through this, and while the first two discs have good material (surprisingly including some Big Bill Broonzy), the third disc is really blowing me away. The weak spots, not surprisingly, are the vocals: the Broonzy is a pleasant surprise, but the typical jazz vocalists are typical. Byas' bebop was state-of-the-art, but his real forte was playing ballads, and in that he's really supreme here. There's a follow-up *Complete 1946-1951 European Small Group Master Takes*. Wish I had a copy of that. [9]

Don Byas: *Laura* (1950-52, Gitanes -00) This is a subset of Byas' recordings for the Blue Star label, previously collected on the long-out-of-print *Don Byas on Blue Star* (Emarcy 833405), a personal favorite. The songs are almost all standards, the pace slow, the groups minimal, leaving you with an intense study of Byas' tone and form. "The Man I Love" is especially exquisite. Seems slight at first, but it gets to the essence of the man. [9]

Donald Byrd

Donald Byrd: *The Cat Walk* (1961, Blue Note -07) Versatile, prolific trumpet player, leading a group with baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams and pianist Duke Pearson that would just as soon boogie as bebop; Byrd goes both ways, indecisively, to mixed effect. [5]

Don Byron

Don Byron: *Plays the Music of Mickey Katz* (1992, Elektra Nonesuch) Byron's fondness for klezmer is often written off as a desire for juicier clarinet parts, but there is more going on here. Katz was a parodist -- he started out with Spike Jones, and his broad humor is easily grasped in something as slight and obvious as his "Seder Dance." Byron clearly gets off on such hijinks -- in his liner notes he cites such comparable bandleaders as Raymond Scott and John Kirby, who he took up in his later *Bug Music*. Talented group of musicians, too, including pianist Uri Caine, who dug deeper into much the same history with his *Tin Pan Alley*. [+]

Don Byron: *No-Vibe Zone* (1996, Knitting Factory) Quintet with Uri Caine doing much of the heavy lifting. Byron plays some spectacular clarinet. [+]

Don Byron: *Nu Blaxploitation* (1998, Blue Note) A glorious mess, with its raps, funk horns, interview segments, spoken bullshit, Biz Markie, and just a dash of Byron's klezmer clarinet. Branford isn't even in the game. [+]

George Cables

George Cables: *Why Not?* (1975, Why Not -09) Postbop pianist, thoughtful, fluid, built a career accompanying famous saxophonists from Sonny Rollins to Joe Henderson to Art Pepper -- the latter pairing good for some of his best records ever -- but has patiently accumulated thirty-some albums under his own name, mostly in the far reaches of the industry; this was his first, good enough to name the label, a nice example of the grace he had from the start and never lost. [8]

George Cables: *Morning Song* (1980, High Note -08) Two sides of Art Pepper's favorite pianist of the period: six tightly wound solo cuts, mixed with four loosely sprung quartet takes, with Eddie Henderson's airy, boppish trumpet out in the lead. [6]

Cachao

Cachao: Descargas: *The Havana Sessions* (1957-61, Yemaya 2CD -07) The best known, or at least the best nicknamed, of a family of legendary Cuban bassists, Israel Lopez had a hand in the invention of the mambo and fifty years later picked up a Grammy for reprising his career in two marvelous volumes of *Master Sessions*; he made his name, however, with these state of the art jam sessions. [9]

Jackie Cain

Jackie Cain & Roy Kral: *A Wilder Alias* (1973, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) More often just Jackie & Roy, singer and pianist-vocalist-arranger, started out in 1954 and had been around the block a couple times before CTI picked them up; I don't know them well enough to tell how anomalous this is, but the voices are lashed to the contours of some incredibly loopy music, with Joe Farrell's sax the sole relief, the flute and vibes solos faring far less well. [1]

Uri Caine

The Uri Caine Ensemble: *Gustav Mahler in Toblach: I Went Out This Morning Over the Countryside* (1998, Winter & Winter -2CD -99) Needless to say, I don't know Mahler from the man in the moon. Despite some odd spots, this is actually pretty amazing music. The trumpet (Ralph Alessi), alto sax (David Binney), and piano (Caine) keep is mostly within the jazz sphere, although Mark Feldman's violin can (and often does) go either way. Aaron Bensoussan sings on the second disc, in kind of an operatic/cantorial mode -- not my thing, but he gets away with it. [+]

Uri Caine: *The Sidewalks of New York: Tin Pan Alley* (1999, Winter & Winter) Gave this another spin after Christgau CG'ed it -- three spins, in fact -- and it comes together on at least two levels: as a spot-on compendium of 1892-1914 popsongs, and as the fine edge that smart avant-gardists hone even when they're historically painstaking. Secret ingredient: Bob Stewart. [9]

Terry Callier

Terry Callier: *Occasional Rain* (1972, Verve -08) Singer-songwriter, started as a folk singer, but more like an unpolished soul man who doesn't go for anything slick or pop; has something of a cult following, but it's hard to say why. [5]

Terry Callier: *What Color Is Love* (1973, Verve -08) More soul, still about the only contemporary he reminds me of is Major Lance, who was still more pop; clicks on maybe 2 of 7 songs, and has redeeming social merit on the cover. [5]

Cab Calloway

Cab Calloway: *The Hi-De-Ho Man* (1930-33, Jazz Legends -03) A flamboyant song-and-dance man, Calloway took over a first rate hot band called the Missourians in 1930 and developed them into one of the most successful jazz orchestras of the era. His later work is easier to find, especially the late '30s period with tenor sax great Chu Berry, but his biggest hit, "Minnie the Moocher," came early, and it set the stage for all the "Hi-De-Ho" that followed. (Like Peggy Sue, Minnie spawned a marriage day sequel.) Classics and JSP have more exhaustive compilations, but this is the basic starter package. [10]

Candido Camero

B. 1921, Havana, Cuba; to New York, 1952.

Candido Camero: *Candido* (1956, Verve -04) Joe Puma's guitar adds as much latin flavor as Candido's congas, but in the end all the salsa just sets up Cohn's genteel mainstream sax. It feel slight, but it's hard to get to much of Cohn swinging out the likes of "Perdido" and "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "Cheek to Cheek." [+]

Roy Campbell

Roy Campbell: *New Kingdom* (1991, Delmark -92) Pyramid Trio (Campbell-Parker-Matsuura) for three cuts, some extra players for the rest. In general, the smaller group works better; in other words, extra vibes and alto sax/flute don't help much, when the point is to tune in on Campbell's trumpet. (Although Zane Massey's sax on "Peace" does sound pretty good, and Bryan Carrott's vibes aren't exactly in the way.) [+]

Roy Campbell Pyramid Trio: *Ancestral Homeland* (1998, No More) The drummer here is Zen Matsuura, who deft touch on exotic rhythms recalls Kahil El'Zabar. With Parker on bass, this is a rhythm section that can steal the show, but they tend to vanish on cuts like "The Positive Path," which Campbell takes deliberately. But the pace picks up with two Parker compositions, and the final cuts really come together. Campbell can play bop and can play free, but "Brother Yusef" reminds you that he cut his teeth under Lateef's wings. [+]

Rüdiger Carl

Rüdiger Carl: *Zwei Quintette* (1987, FMP -88) Below the title line: "Two Compositions by Rüdiger Carl"; the two pieces run 40:41 and 36:28, originally on two LPs, not sure that there's even been a CD reissue; Carl plays tenor sax and clarinet, along with Philip Wachsmann (violin, electronics), Stephan Wittwer (guitar, more electronics), Irène Schweizer (piano), and bass; the first (40:41) piece keeps a repeated riff in play with minor variations, never less than enchanting; the second (36:28) starts stuck in ambient mud, takes a while before more strenuous sax manages to dislodge it. [7]

Ralph Carney

Ralph Carney: *I Like You (A Lot)* (1999, Akron Cracker/Birdman) Carney is a reed player associated with Tom Waits, but he's made a couple of albums on his own -- this one he plays almost everything on, and sings (if you can call it that). Two covers: "Chant of the Weed" from Don Redman, "Christopher Columbus" from Chu Berry and Andy Razaf. Sounds like an interesting sideman. [5]

Benny Carter

Benny Carter: *Sax Ala Carter* (1960, Capitol Jazz -04) A quartet with Jimmy Rowles, Leroy Vinnegar, and Mel Lewis, perfect support for the great swing saxophonist. Few have matched the sheer beauty of Carter's tone, and not even Johnny Hodges could string together a solo with the elegance and precision that Carter invariably possessed. At this point Carter was easing himself out of his Hollywood day job, moving into the most graceful old age in human history. But that may be unfair at this point:

he did, after all, still have *Further Definitions* ahead of him. And was 30+ years away from *Harlem Renaissance*, which makes this exquisite set practically his prime. [9]

Benny Carter: *Further Definitions: The Complete Further Definitions Sessions* (1961-66, Impulse -97): Two albums, the first with Coleman Hawkins reprising and extending their 1937 session that produced "Crazy Rhythm" and "Honeysuckle Rose"; the later *Additions to Further Definitions*, without Hawkins, fits on the disc, and isn't too much of a letdown. [10]

John Carter

John Carter-Bobby Bradford Quartet: *Seeking* (1969, Hatology -06) Legendary pianoless (two horn) group, with Carter playing more sax (alto and tenor) than I'd expect, especially given how his clarinet (if not the flute) takes off; Bradford's trumpet keeps pace. [8]

Ron Carter

Ron Carter: *All Blues* (1973, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) Bassist, best known for his work with Miles Davis, composed 4 of 6 tracks here but the Davis title track is the sweet spot; Roland Hanna and Billy Cobham make it mostly a piano trio, except with Joe Henderson appears -- even then he plays along rather than taking charge. [5]

Papa Celestin

Papa Celestin/Sam Morgan: *Papa Celestin & Sam Morgan* (1925-28, Azure -02) These are the classic tracks by the two key New Orleans bandleaders; the same music, plus or minus a track, is on the JSP box, but it's more tightly organized here on a single disc, with more documentation. [9]

Eugene Chadbourne

Eugene Chadbourne and the Insect and Western Party: *Beauty and the Bloodsucker* (1997-99, Leo -99) "Dr. Chadbourne uses today's small jazz combo to portray the beauty as well as the horrors of insect life, the music ranging from bop to western to heavy metal." Something like that. [5]

Serge Chaloff

Serge Chaloff: *Boston Blow-Up!* (1955, Capitol Jazz '06) The ill-fated baritone saxophonist's masterpiece was *Blue Serge* (1956), an elegant quartet where everything goes right. This earlier sextet is much sloppier but nearly as impressive -- the three horns achieving a balance of raw power and feather light touch that producer Stan Kenton often aimed for and rarely achieved. [9]

Paul Chambers

Paul Chambers: *Bass on Top* (1957, Blue Note -07) An awkward attempt at a bass-centric album, although by the end Chambers seems happier slipping into the background behind guitarist Kenny Burrell and pianist Hank Jones, showing off the fat resonance and assured swing that made him the go-to bassist for everyone who was anyone in the late 1950s. [5]

James Chance

James Chance & the Contortions: *Buy* (1979, ZE -04) Originally attributed to the Contortions, at a time when Chance was beginning to cultivate an alter ego the leader of James White and the Blacks; the Contortions were one of the post-punk New York bands Brian Eno produced for *No New York*, possibly the last serious attempt to find the new thing on the avant fringe of the old things; the jagged rhythms and skronk sax seem less extreme now than then, but also less developed. [+]

James White and the Blacks: *Off White* (1979, ZE -04) Two more versions of "Contort Yourself," one an August Darnell remix, so think James Chance and the Coconuts, which also works for "(Tropical) Heav Wave"; the balance are black/white goofs ("White Savages," "Bleached Black," "White Devil"); bonus cuts include the 10-minute "Christmas With Satan"; trivia disguised as concept. [+]

James Chance & the Contortions: *Paris 1980: Live aux Bains Douches* (1980, ZE -04) Like most live albums, a bit thin and unsteady, but for one who wanders as erratically as Chance, at least some of the lurches here work as improv; self-contortions as usual, plus a James Brown nod on "King Heroin." [5]

James White and the Blacks: *Sax Maniac* (1982, Infinite Zero/American -96) When James Chance calls one number "Sax Machine" he makes his concept too plain: skronk a la James Brown. But the one he calls "Irresistible Impulse" is just that. [+]

James White's *Flaming Demonics* (1983, ZE -04) Chance grinds "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" into a puddle of gore -- I spoze the Devil made him do it, or maybe it was too much dancing with zombies, but it gives an unshakeably bitter taste to an album of rote shronk and occasional oddities; "The Natives Are Restless" is worth hearing, the Ellington medley is respectful, and the bonus "Town Without Pity" gets some. [4]

James Chance: *Sax Education* (1978-88, Tiger Style -2CD -04) The combination of Chance's thin, skronky alto sax with August Darnell's disco beats sounds like state-of-the-art jazztronica but dates from a quarter of a century ago. At the time, Chance's idea was to follow CBGB new wave with something weirder -- a James Brown beat damaged in the larceny; sharp, whiney, yelping proto-punk vocals; toy keybs, guitar drone, girlie choruses. Not sure if it was meant as comedy, but it is: a lot funnier in reality than the idea of Albert Ayler playing disco-punk fusion. First disc contains "the hits"; second is a concert, so he gets to play the hits again. [9]

Thomas Chapin

Thomas Chapin Trio Plus Brass: *Insomnia* (1992, Knitting Factory Works) Chapin's trio consists of Mario Pavone (bass) and Michael Sarin (drums). They cut a very taut rhythm for the lead piece ("Pantheon"), with Chapin on flute, before the brass cuts in. The brass consists of two trumpets (Al Bryant, Frank London), two trombones (Curtis Fowlkes, Peter McLachern), and tuba (Marcus Rojas). The second piece proceeds similarly, but with Chapin on alto, which gives him more range to stretch out his avantish lines. There's a small tendency here to use the brass as an old-fashioned brass band, and in any case they carry little improvisational responsibility. But they serve as interesting foils, while Chapin and his trio have a terrific time. [9]

Ray Charles

Ray Charles: *The Early Years* (1949-52, King -95) Early stuff, before he developed any sort of signature sound. Sounds pretty good, but not familiar, and not major. Note the blues, "Sitting on Top of the World"; note the country song, "You Always Miss the Water (When the Well Goes Dry)." On his way. [+]

Ray Charles: *The Genius Hits the Road* (1956-72, Concord -09) A 1960 concept album with 12 songs with place names, if you count "Basin Street Blues" and "Georgia on My Mind" -- more typical is "Alabama Bound," "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," "Deep in the Heart of Texas," "Blue Hawaii"; like Rhino's 1997 reissue, includes 7 extras, two more Georgias and some country roads. [6]

Ray Charles: *Friendship* (1984-86, Columbia/Legacy -05) An album of country duets refurbished to cash in on the success of *Genius Loves Company*, but inferior in every respect: songs, partners, arrangements, the attention span of the genius himself; the non-country bonuses are a bit better, even the one with Billy Joel, but the only winner, a George Jones joke, can be had elsewhere: the expanded *My Very Special Friends* and, much better, *The Spirit of Country*. [3]

Jeannie Cheatham

Jeannie and Jimmy Cheatham: *The Concord Jazz Heritage Series* (1984-95, Concord) Jeannie sings and plays piano; Jimmy plays bass trombone. The music is blues, which is predictable and comforting. Much of the added value comes from the fine jazz musicians that Concord supplements the Sweet Baby Blues Band with. [+]

Chris Cheek

Chris Cheek: *A Girl Named Joe* (1997, Fresh Sound) The two saxophonists here (Cheek and Mark Turner) do not joust; where both play one expands with slight variations on the other. The opener moves at a snail's pace, strangely insinuating. The closer finally moves much faster, the two saxes threading in and out. Between, there is much evidence of careful thought, lines on sax and guitar (Ben Monder) that seem freshly minted and near classic. Nothing rough or unfinished; if anything a bit too carefully crafted. [+]

Don Cherry

Don Cherry: *Complete Communion* (1965, Blue Note -00) Two long pieces, each a suite with four movements: the title cut at 20:38, "Elephantasy" at 19:36. If that sounds like he's spoiling for a big band, rest assured: all you get here is a four-piece, with Ed Blackwell and Henry Grimes down below, and Gato Barbieri and Cherry up front. The combination really crackles, especially on the title piece. [9]

Don Cherry: *Where Is Brooklyn?* (1966, Blue Note -05) After his apprenticeship with Ornette Coleman, after two ambitious large band projects, this is a rough edged, bare bones blowing session, with Pharoah Sanders bringing on the noise, and Ed Blackwell dicing up the rhythm; long out of print, this is a missing link in Cherry's discography -- an update of *The Avant Garde*, his 1960 meeting with Coltrane; a prequel to *Mu*, his 1969 duets with Blackwell. [9]

Don Cherry: *Live at Café Montmartre 1966* (1966, ESP-Disk -07) A quintet with a fired-up tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri joining the leader's trumpet in a free jazz joust, and Karl Berger's vibes providing a shimmering undertow on vibes; probably not the same gig Magnetic released two CDs from, but the doc is unclear; maybe the producers were as wired as the band? [6]

Don Cherry: *Live at Café Montmartre 1966: Volume Two* (1966, ESP-Disk -08) Sloppy seconds in Copenhagen, with Gato Barbieri's tenor sax sparring with the leader's trumpet over the fractured field of Karl Berger vibes, playing such complex Cherry compositions as "Complete Communion" loose and short-handed. [5]

Don Cherry: *"Mu" First Part/"Mu" Second Part* (1969, Fuel 2000 -01) Duets with Ed Blackwell, varied as Cherry switches from pocket trumpet to piano and various flutes. [9]

Don Cherry: *Blue Lake* (1971, Fuel 2000 -03) With South African bassist Johnny Dyani and Turkish percussionist Okay Temiz, with Cherry chanting and playing piano as well as his usual pocket trumpet, a taste of the world music of a future that never came and probably never will be. [+]

Don Cherry: *Organic Music Society* (1971-72, Caprice -12) Searching for world consciousness, or just scratching it, from "North Brazilian Ceremonial Hymn" (Nana Vasconcelos), through "Relativity Suite," "The Creator Has a Master Plan," "Terry's Tune" (as in Riley), and "Bra Joe From Kilimanjaro" (Dollar Brand), with a Turkish drummer and way too much singing. [6]

Günter Christmann

Günter Christmann/Detlef Schöenberg Duo: *We Play* (1973, FMP) Trombone player, born in Poland during the war, like Roswell Rudd in many ways, including his ability to tap into Kid Ory while playing stuff from another world: free grunge, kicked left and right by his percussionist cohort. [8]

June Christy

June Christy: *Something Cool* (1953-55, Capitol Jazz -91) She was one of the main jazz singers of the '50s. She started with Stan Kenton's huge band, and did notable work for Pete Rugolo (collected here). She had a well-rounded voice which makes a strong impression without bowling you over or seeming particularly coy or sexy or whatever -- she suggests seriousness and skillfulness and maturity. The original *Something Cool* album has subsequently been reissued in a "Complete Mono and Stereo" package, garnering a crown from the *Penguin Guide*. This is an earlier reissue, which adds stray singles to the original 1953 album. [9]

June Christy: *The Misty Miss Christy* (1955, Capitol -92) One of Stan Kenton's singers, emerging as the definitive voice of cool in the 1950s; one of her key works, her voice as authoritative as ever, but Pete Rugolo's strings were never much of a strong point. [7]

June Christy: *Ballads for Night People* (1959-61, Capitol Jazz -05) Bob Cooper and Bud Shank are the constants among three crack west coast bands that pop up at opportune moments while the cool one has her way with a mess of standards; two by Ellington have rarely been done more elegantly, and the big band "All You Need Is a Quarter" finally melts the ice. [+]

Sonny Clark

Sonny Clark Trio (1957, Blue Note -87) With Paul Chambers (bass) and Philly Joe Jones (drums). One of the finest jazz pianists of the '50s, in a superb trio outing from relatively early on. Three cuts are doubled up with alternate takes, which effectively make them similar in length to the 9:53 version of Dizzy Gillespie's "Be-Bop" -- effectively the centerpiece of this album. [9]

Kenny Clarke

Kenny Clarke's Sextet: *Plays André Hodeir* (1957, Universal/Gitanes -00) You may be thinking Bird and Diz, but truth is bebop has always been defined by its drummers. One of the interesting factoids about bebop is how few drummers could play the music: turn any pre-1950 classic over and you'll find one of three names: Art Blakey, Max Roach, or from the very start, Kenny Clarke. Roy Haynes came a bit later, and a couple of established drummers, like Shelly Manne, made the conversion. Clarke had a short reign: he liked the atmosphere better in France, which took him out of the spotlight here. But it also made this marvelous record possible. Clarke was a famous name in Paris, but his group was mostly French, including the extraordinary pianist Martial Solal. Hodeir is best known here as a jazz scholar, which infused his music as well as his writing. His pieces here are arranged around themes from famous American jazz masters -- Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Gerry Mulligan, Tadd Dameron, Milt Jackson, Benny Carter -- with his own pieces connecting. The horn work is sharp and clever, but the whole thing maintains a light feel. [9]

Stanley Clarke

Stanley Clarke: *School Days* (1976, Epic) Bassist, can play the bull fiddle but prefers bass guitar, especially here where he's looking for crossover funk. He has guitars and keybs at his disposal, plus a brass section and a string section and a short list of drummers that includes Billy Cobham, but doesn't make much use of any of them, so no matter what else is happening you hear the bass fuzz first. [3]

Nels Cline

Nels Cline/Gregg Bendian: *Interstellar Space Revisited: The Music of John Coltrane* (1998, Atavistic) The Coltrane in question is the late, weird one, most specifically the duets with Rashid Ali. Here Cline plays the Coltrane role on guitar, while Bendian makes like Ali. It is noisy, natch, although the tail stretch of "Saturn" shows some sensitivity. Bendian is especially impressive, and Cline's at least got some neat tricks. [+]

Rosemary Clooney

The Essential Rosemary Clooney (1947-56, Columbia/Legacy -04) Mixed bag from her early period, including big pop hits like "Come On-A My House," "Mambo Italiano," and "This Ole House," plus standards of the era like "The Lady Is a Tramp." [+]

Arnett Cobb

Arnette Cobb/Guy Lafitte: *Tenor Abrupt: The Definitive Black & Blue Sessions* (1980, Black & Blue -03) Recorded in France. Lafitte is a similar player, a few years younger (1927-98, vs. 1918-89 for Cobb). I haven't tried to figure out who played what -- most of the time only one plays at a time, and the booklet doesn't offer any clues. But whoever played "Que Reste-t-il de nos Amours" has a marvelous ballad tone. Special treat: pianist Roland Hanna. This series was put together by Jean-Michel Proust and Jean-Marc Fritz as they tried to track down surviving swing giants. Among the best sessions are ones with Illinois Jacquet and Budd Johnson. This one comes close. [+]

Porky Cohen

Porky Cohen with Roomful of Blues & Special Guests: *Rhythm & Bones* (1996, Bullseye Blues) Cohen plays trombone, inspired by Jack Teagarden. He took lessons from Miff Mole, and played in big bands for Charlie Barnet, the Casa Loma Orchestra, Lucky Millinder, Tommy Dorsey, Boyd Raeburn, and Artie Shaw. When they faded, he played dixieland, then wound up in Roomful of Blues. He was 72 when this, the only record ever issued under his inimitable name, was cut. AMG files this as blues, but I prefer Cohen's jazz credentials. Plus this is mostly instrumental -- the two exceptions being Sugar Ray Norcia on "Sent For You Yesterday" (Jimmy Rushing has nothing to worry about) and Michelle Wilson on "Trombone Porky" -- a tribute piece. Excellent booklet, laid out like a tribute to the veteran journeyman. Nothing really special on the album, but I do love trombone, and appreciate that it's featured here. [+]

Nat King Cole

King Cole Trio: *Hit That Jive: 1936-1946* (1936-46, Jazz Legends -04) Obvious choices, but then Cole's light jive trios recorded so many indelible hits that compilers find it easy to choose but hard to distinguish themselves, even though there are hundreds of fine songs to choose from. "I'm an Errand Boy for Rhythm" is one unobvious cut that lets them jam. [9]

Nat King Cole: *Cole Español* (1958, Capitol) In his heyday Cole cranked out 3-4 records a year, so the idea of doing one in Spanish wasn't much of a gamble; the backing tracks were cut in Havana, Cole dubbed his vocals in Los Angeles, and Nelson Riddle fiddled a bit, all of which sounds more authentic, and accomplished, than it has any right to. [7]

Nat King Cole: *A Mis Amigos* (1959, Capitol) Cut on tour in a studio in Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian studio cats leading off with a sharp mariachi, then settling down into a cozy ballad; Cole is game, dashing, and smooth, even slipping in a couple lyrics in Portuguese, well before the bossa nova craze. [7]

Nat King Cole: *The World of Nat King Cole* (1944-91, Capitol -05) I find it really annoying that this doesn't have dates. (Found chart information in the publicity.) Cole's period with Capitol ran from 1943-64, and those years apply pretty consistently for his many career-spanning comps, so they can be assumed here. The 1991 date comes from Natalie Cole's version of "Unforgettable" -- that's when she added her vocals to an unfinished track, constructing an after-the-fact duet with her father. [10]

Ornette Coleman

Ornette Coleman: *Something Else!!!!* (1958, Contemporary/OJC -11) With his white plastic alto sax, scratch tone, and knack for breaking the rules and making them work, Coleman's debut album portends the shape to come, but the piano has yet to make the break and seems out of place -- despite the impressive chops Walter Norris brings to the job; easy to underrate compared to what he did in the next two years, or to overrate it if you look for prophecy. [8]

Ornette Coleman: *Tomorrow Is the Question!* (1959, Contemporary) Second album, quartet with Don Cherry on trumpet but he had yet to find his rhythm section: Shelly Manne is the drummer, and the bass slot is split between Percy Heath on the first side and Red Mitchell on the second; the trademark sound is there, but they slow down and break up here and there. [7]

Ornette Coleman: *To Whom Who Keeps a Record* (1959-60, Water -07) Outtakes from *Change of the Century* and *This Is Our Music*, released only in Japan until *Beauty Is a Rare Thing: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* boxed them; they are typical of Coleman's classic quartet, barely overshadowed by the first tier studio albums, and all the more interesting for generous helpings of Don Cherry's pocket trumpet. [9]

The Ornette Coleman Quartet: *This Is Our Music* (1960, Atlantic -61) Fifth album, third on Atlantic with Charlie Haden on bass and Ed Blackwell on drums making the edgy interplay between the leader's alto sax and Don Cherry's trumpet seem like child's play -- which in a sense it is, not that anyone else can do it. [9]

Ornette Coleman: *Ornette on Tenor* (1961, Atlantic -62) The last of the Atlantics, with the leader on tenor instead of his usual alto sax, Don Cherry on pocket trumpet, Jimmy Garrison on bass, and Ed Blackwell on drums; the larger sax slows Coleman a bit, gives him less glide and more growl, making him sound more like John Coltrane -- cf. *The Avant Garde* with Coltrane and Cherry -- or Dewey Redman, who replaced Cherry and later rejoined Cherry in place of Coleman in *Old and New Dreams*. [8]

Ornette Coleman: *Town Hall, 1962* (1962, ESP-Disk -08) Three cuts with the trio that in 1965 cut *At the Golden Circle, Stockholm*, both volumes highly recommended, this less essential but unmistakable; sandwiched in the middle is a 9:17 string quartet, Coleman's first recorded glimpse of his harmolodic chamber music, something else again. [8]

Ornette Coleman: *New York Is Now* (1968, Blue Note -89) He was the first jazz musician I really fell for, and my first few moments with this record brought all that back. I don't remember the last time I played anything by him (been busy, you know), but he does sound great, and I'm reminded of many little signatures of his work elsewhere. The group is impressive too: especially when Jimmy Garrison goes arco on bass. Elvin Jones drums, and Dewey Redman joins in on tenor sax. Evidently Ornette plays a little bit of his trumpet (the credits are kind of messed up there, for the avant "We Now Interrupt for a Commercial" is certainly one case). Still, the music is rather messy, and the way this particular reissue is put together (the alternate version of "Broad Way Blues" follows the released version immediately) is odd. But it starts awfully strong, and the later stuff starts to make sense when you realize that the sax is Dewey Redman, and Ornette's just providing the funny trumpet smears. [9]

Ornette Coleman: *Love Call* (1968, Blue Note) Second album from the two *New York Is Now* sessions, with Dewey Redman, Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones, and Coleman playing trumpet as well as

alto sax; I can't dismiss these as leftovers, but there are spots that don't quite cohere, as well as blasts of the usual brilliance. [7]

Ornette Coleman: *Friends and Neighbors: Live at Prince Street* (1970, BGP -13) Not many live recordings when Coleman filled the hole Don Cherry left in his quartet with tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman. The title cut gets an amusing singalong treatment, but then it's down to business, the two saxes slipping deftly by one another, even when they reach for the heights -- Coleman's alto has the advantage there, both higher pitched and more familiar with the terrain. [9]

Johnny Coles

Johnny Coles: *Little Johnny C* (1963, Blue Note -05) Extra horns in the front line limit this as a showcase for the leader's trumpet, but it's buoyant hard bop smartly done, and Duke Pearson's piano has a gospel ring to it. [+]

Steve Coleman

Steve Coleman/Robin Eubanks/Greg Osby/Cassandra Wilson: *Flashback on M-Base* (1985-90, JMT -93) The one M-Base record is attributed to the Collective, but this second package of archival material falls back to the Collective's most prominent figures; the idea was funk-jazz fusion, which this achieves more often than not; the notes are tripped up in Wilson's arty vocals. [6]

Steve Coleman/Dave Holland: *Phase Space* (1991, DIW) Coleman's main thrust has been towards a funk-fusion that keeps a respectful distance from hip-hop, but when he moves in that direction, you tend to forget what a fine mainstream jazzman he can be. The duet format confines him to long stretches of delicate craft, and Holland is both the perfect accompanist and worth concentrating on in his own right. [+]

Graham Collier

Graham Collier: *Workpoints* (1968-75, Cuneiform -2CD -05) The British never paid bebop much heed. Well into the '60s British jazz was dominated by the trad jazz movement -- Ken Colyer, Humphrey Lyttelton, Chris Barber, Acker Bilk, Kenny Ball. Then in the late '60s Britain developed a distinctive avant-garde culture, built as much on the ideas of ultramodernists like Karlheinz Stockhausen and Cornelius Cardew and the suddenly expanding vistas of art rock as on anything in the jazz tradition -- least of all bebop. (The few exceptions to the no-bop rule included Tubby Hayes and Ronnie Scott, remembered mostly as eccentrics.) These two concerts led by bassist Collier are good examples of the evolution of the new British jazz. The first is a large band -- nine horns, vibes, bass and drums -- working in extended forms, striking in the intricate layering of horns and the muscularity of the rhythm. The other is a sextet, also working long pieces, this time centered around Ed Speight's guitar. In both the composer maintains control while letting the bands work out the details -- a mid-point between the dominating arrangements of the classic swing bands and the pure improvisation just around the corner, but neither compromise nor transition. More like a new foundation for a postclassical European music invigorated by jazz. [9]

Alice Coltrane

Originally Alice McLeod, from Detroit, played piano with Terry Gibbs before marrying John Coltrane in 1965, soon replacing McCoy Tyner in her husband's group, until his death in 1967. Her own discography starts up in 1968, a dense flurry of records up to 1978 followed by a long break and a 2004 comeback.

Alice Coltrane: *Huntington Ashram Monastery* (1969, Impulse) Opens with a typical Coltrane riff wrapped in harp, a clever effect not least because it isn't overdone. Most of what follows is piano trio, with Ron Carter and Rashied Ali slightly on edge, and dense, fleet, and eloquent work by the leader. [7]

Alice Coltrane: *World Galaxy* (1971, Impulse) Opens and closes with iconic Coltrane pieces -- "My Favorite Things" and "A Love Supreme" -- surrounding three "Galaxy" titles with Indian references. Mostly dense layers of organ, harp, and strings, perhaps meant for meditation but a cloying backdrop, although Frank Lowe and Leroy Jenkins manage to break through with an isolated solo apiece. [5]

Alice Coltrane: *Universal Consciousness* (1971, Impulse) Her main instruments were dense organ and celestial harp, rounded out with a violin trio including Leroy Jenkins. Parts develop a sprightly avant-garde feel, but the density leaves you conscious less of the universe than its sheer mass. [5]

Alice Coltrane: *Lord of Lords* (1972, Impulse) With Charlie Haden, Ben Riley, and twenty-two strings, Coltrane's classical training finally wins out -- the one cover is a slice from Stravinsky's *Firebird*. [4]

John Coltrane

John Coltrane: *Stardust* (1958, Prestige -07) Two sessions toward the end of Coltrane's tenure with Prestige, each yielding two stretched out nice-and-easy standards, with Wilbur Harden on the first set, and 20-year-old Freddie Hubbard on the second; the sense of accomplishment is earned, but nothing here suggests the giant steps to come. [6]

The Best of John Coltrane (1956-58, Prestige -04) A late bloomer, Coltrane was fast but indistinct during his yeoman years at Prestige, where his collected works fill sixteen discs of a big box few take seriously. Boiled way down to a single disc this is warm and flavorful but hardly suggestive of the giant steps only a year away. [+]

The John Coltrane Quartet: *Africa/Brass* (1961, Impulse -08) His first Impulse! album, with -- despite the credit -- a large group that leaned heavily on Eric Dolphy; the session also generated a *Volume 2* and various repackages, of which 3-cut 33:40 original selection is the shortest and the heaviest. [9]

John Coltrane: *The Complete Africa/Brass Sessions* (1961, Impulse -2CD) Not much more than the single CD that consolidated the original two LPs. Despite Eric Dolphy and the extra horns, this is firmly anchored in the quartet, with McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones distinctive and Coltrane himself utterly dominant. [10]

John Coltrane: *At the Village Vanguard* (1961, Impulse -08) Less is less, whether compared to the 4-CD box set that finally documented this legendary 4-night stand with Eric Dolphy, or even to the 5-cut *Master Takes* single that also came out in 1997; this stops short 36:31, after a blistering "Chasin' the Trane" that's just getting started. [9]

John Coltrane: *Impressions* (1961-63, Impulse -08) Scattered live scraps, each side with something 3-4 minutes and something 14-15 minutes; the leader is a little iffy at the start, but the Quartet is as steady as ever; besides, with Coltrane the search is part of the allure. [7]

John Coltrane: *A Love Supreme [Deluxe Edition]* (1964-65, Impulse -2CD -02) The original album, standing alone on the first CD, unadorned in its scant 32-minute length, remains one of the most astonishing pieces of music ever recorded. In Coltrane's discography, *A Love Supreme* is on the cusp, his last fully coherent album before his free fall into cacophony, and a good part of what makes it so great is its pregnant tension -- Elvin Jones' feathered drums and Jimmy Garrison's bass patching up the surface of a music that Coltrane threatens to rip asunder. The second disc combines a remarkably pungent live performance in France seven months hence with alternate takes, for once adding measurably to the focal work. [10]

John Coltrane: *Dear Old Stockholm* (1963-65, Impulse -93) A quartet recording with Roy Haynes in the drum chair, two cuts from a 1963 studio session, three from 1965, the title track an old trad piece, the rest originals; later cuts like "After the Crescent" break loose in his full fury, but the final short prayer sounds thin. [8]

John Coltrane/Archie Shepp: *New Thing at Newport* (1965, Impulse -09) Two separate sets, with Coltrane's Quartet conflicted and sloppy on one 12:43 cut, Shepp both further out and more authoritative with Bobby Hutcherson's vibes interesting in their own right; previous CD releases had one more cut each, the extra material helpful although Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" is even more discombobulated. [6]

John Coltrane: *Living Space* (1965, Impulse -98): Quartet tracks, from a year so productive the label didn't bother with releasing the first four until 1978, then tacked on yet another cut for this release; not at his greatest, but he's so intense, on such a high plateau, that anyone else would be green with envy, and Tyner somehow manages to keep up. [9]

John Coltrane: *One Down, One Up: Live at the Half Note* (1965, Impulse -2CD -05) Radio broadcast tapes, long circulated as bootlegs, finally cleaned up for an official release. The group is the famous McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones quartet, but near the end of their run, with Coltrane ready to head off for other dimensions. Worthwhile, of course, but not as fresh as some of the earlier live material, of which there is quite a lot. [8]

John Coltrane: *Kulu Sé Mama* (1965, Impulse) This is a relatively mild example of Coltrane's far-out avant-garde period. It doubles up Coltrane's quartet, with the title track based on a poem sung by Juno Lewis. Fascinating stuff. [+]

John Coltrane: *Stellar Regions* (1967, Impulse -95) One of Coltrane's last recordings, with Alice Coltrane (piano), Jimmy Garrison (bass), and Rashied Ali (drums). I've never been much of a fan of late Coltrane -- roughly everything from *Ascension* (1965) on, although I suspect that were I to go back and give it all a careful listen some worthwhile things would emerge. In particular, my opinion of Rashied Ali is now much higher than when I only knew him through his work with Coltrane. The *Penguin Guide* calls *Interstellar Space*, a duo with Ali, "the final masterpiece," then goes on to pan this. But it starts promisingly enough, with Coltrane and Ali practically in duet. It does wear a little thin along the way, and Alice Coltrane isn't a lot of help on piano. The Coltrane-Ali interplay is reportedly better elsewhere, so it's prudent not to credit it too highly here. [5]

John Coltrane: *Interstellar Space* (1967, Impulse -91) His last album, cut five months before his death at age 40 of liver cancer, released in 1974 (the two bonus tracks first appeared in 1978); duets with Rashied Ali, the young drummer who shepherded Trane into the furthest reaches of the avant-garde -- I can't say as I've ever approved, but this is the first album I've heard where they really connect, both players in perpetually frantic motion, pouring their hearts out; or maybe I'm just getting the hang of this. [9]

John Coltrane: *Expression* (1967, Impulse -93) Mostly cut a week before the duos on *Interstellar Space*, the group is expanded here with Alice Coltrane on piano and Jimmy Garrison on bass, plus one cut features a long Pharoah Sanders flute solo; after early floundering, the group comes together impressively on the title piece, and Coltrane at least continues furiously through the bonus track. [7]

Ken Colyer

Ken Colyer's Jazzmen: *In Concert -- 1959* (1959, Dine-a-Mite Jazz) This is the only example I have of Colyer, who was a founder and mainstay of Britain's trad jazz movement. Although trad doesn't seem to get much respect outside of Britain, I've heard examples of outstanding group interplay. This one, however, seems run-of-the-mill, with much of the problem in getting a clear bead on the rhythm section, which is buried in the mix like a metronome. [4]

Eddie Condon

Eddie Condon and His Band, featuring Fats Waller, Joe Bushkin, and Joe Sullivan: "*Ballin the Jack*" (1939-42, Commodore -89) Plus Pee Wee Russell, Max Kaminski, Marty Marsala, Brad Gowans, George Brunis, Artie Shapiro and George Wettling. Condon is known as the jazz guitarist who never took a solo, but as rhythm guitarists go pencil him in as the Keith Richards of the '30s, not just for his string work but because he could throw a party like none other, and wherever he went the bands just rose to the occasion. These sessions are both typical and superb. They remind you that dixieland jazz remained vibrant in the hands of white Chicagoans long after it faded from memory in New Orleans. [9]

Chris Connor

Chris Connor (1956, Atlantic) June Christy's successor in Stan Kenton's band, famed for her smoky tone, with Atlantic's first vocal jazz album, a hodge podge of band and song styles -- a John Lewis trio, a larger band with Zoot Sims, a welter of period strings; she's credible in all contexts, more so when she gets a Cole Porter lyric. [6]

Chris Connor: *He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not* (1956, Atlantic) I certainly don't like Ralph Burns' strings anywhere near as much as the jazz groups on part of her debut, but midway through I focused on nothing but voice on "Suddenly It's Spring, then dismissing the orchestra was surprised to find them robust in "About the Blues"; Rhapsody's song order is shuffled from the one listed in AMG, but the treatment is so consistent it must be acclimatization either way. [7]

Chris Connor: *I Miss You So* (1956-57, Atlantic -58) Title song her only chart single, not big but a memorable one; again, strings dominate, this time with Ray Ellis conducting, and again Connor overcomes them on the stronger songs; the one odd song out is "They All Laughed," done with a crack

jazz group, a first taste of what became her best album, *Sings the George Gershwin Almanac of Song*. [7]

Chris Connor: *A Jazz Date With Chris Connor* (1956, Atlantic) Like most of Connor's Atlantics, cut in three sessions with slightly varying groups, this one centered around pianist Ralph Sharon, with occasional sax (Al Cohn, Lucky Thompson), trumpet (Joe Wilder), flute (Sam Most), guitar (Joe Puma), vibes (Eddie Costa), even a bit of conga (Mongo Santamaria); nice to escape the strings, but Connor sings much as before, making little of the extra freedom; Rhapsody picks this up from a twofer reissue, tacking *Chris Craft* -- reviewed separately below -- on to the end, a pretty good deal. [7]

Chris Connor: *Chris Craft* (1958, Atlantic): With Stan Free on piano and Mundell Lowe on guitar, Percy Heath of George Duvivier on bass, Ed Shaughnessy on drums, this group has some snap to the rhythm, and Connor responds, showing fine timing on the fast ones, her usual vocal depth on "Lover Man." [8]

Chris Connor: *Sings Ballads of the Sad Cafe* (1959, Atlantic) Only nine cuts, they run a bit long as well as slow, with strings arranged by Ralph Sharon sometimes giving way to a big band borrowed from Count Basie -- Stan Free is the pianist, but the roster is full of Basie-ites from Frank Foster to Sweets Edison to Freddie Green. [6]

Chris Connor: *Witchcraft* (1959, Atlantic) Richard Wess conducts, sometimes dipping into the strings, more often letting a pretty sharp big band get in its punches; neither approach works all that well, except as they frame Connor's voice; however, she sings as authoritatively as ever, which is key here (e.g., "Just in Time"). [8]

Cooper-Moore

Cooper-Moore: *Outtakes 1978* (1978, Hopscotch -05) The artist was born 1946 in Virginia, had a strong music education including a spell at Berklee, moved to New York 1973. He's primarily a pianist, but builds exotic instruments, and frequently plays a one-string contraption called a diddley-bow. He didn't record much until recently. I was much impressed by him in William Parker's In Order to Survive quartet -- his piano has the sort of live-wire intensity that reminds me of Horace Tapscott -- and recall reading somewhere that the only musician he would work with was Parker. Recently he's broke out of Parker's circle a bit, recording a couple of piano trios with Tom Abbs and Chad Taylor, as well as albums with Assif Tsahar, Susie Ibarra, and Bill Cole. By my count, his short, erratic discography includes seven A-list albums -- damn impressive for a guy who doesn't get out much. This is an odd mix of tracks, without much discographical detail beyond that they were recorded in 1978. Cooper-Moore's exotic instruments are present, including ashimba on the opener and a piece on a clay fife, but most of the interest will be the early tracks with David S. Ware, recognizable a full decade before he formed his quartet. [7]

Chick Corea

Chick Corea: *Tones for Joan's Bones* (1966, Rhino/Atlantic -05) Before Scientology, before fusion even, a first album buried deep in the times: a standard issue hard bop quintet, with Woody Shaw's trumpet and Joe Farrell's tenor sax ricocheting over the rhythm, the pianist filling in gaps and flashing speed, showing a bit of grace when he carves some solo space on the title track. [7]

Chick Corea: *Early Circle* (1970, Blue Note) Studious avant-jazz, with Anthony Braxton sounding a little thin, Dave Holland sounding plenty phat, and Barry Altschul mostly out of the way. Same for Corea, which makes this far less bracing or enticing than the later *Paris-Concert* or Holland's formidable *Conference of the Birds*. [5]

Return to Forever: *Romantic Warrior* (1976, Columbia -91) Chick Corea's florid fusion group, which started as the title of a pretty good album (with Flora Purim, Joe Farrell, Stanley Clarke, and Airto Moreira) and evolved through several changes to this quartet with Clarke, Al Di Meola, and Lenny White, until its demise shortly after. Lots of Spanish tinge with this crew, but it's layered over mock classical schmaltz, so much so that the main group they remind me of is ELP. [3]

Chick Corea: *Solo Piano: Improvisations/Children's Songs* (1971-83, ECM 3CD -10) Three solo piano albums find Corea in an exploratory mood. The first two came from a 1971 session, when Corea was working with Miles Davis on the one hand and Anthony Braxton on the other, before he took off on *Return to Forever*. Aside from pieces by Monk and Shorter on *Vol. 2*, everything was improvised, with the melodies on *Vol. 1* especially charming. *Children's Songs* came twelve years later, all improvised, nothing childish about it other than that he tries working from elements. Final cut adds violin and cello, a nice little piece of chamber jazz. [6]

Chick Corea: *Origin: Live at the Blue Note* (1998, Stretch) Strong suit is Steve Wilson's saxophone; weak suit is Steve Wilson's flute. [5]

Stanley Cowell

Stanley Cowell: *Back to the Beautiful* (1989, Concord) With Steve Coleman (alto/soprano sax), Santi Debriano (bass), Joe Chambers (drums). Coleman is the key name there: he plays an attractive postbop which tends to overwhelm everyone else, while Cowell -- with half a load of covers, including two Ellingtons and "But Beautiful" -- plays pretty, mostly in the background. Not a typical album for Cowell, but not a dumb one either. [5]

Stanley Cowell: *Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Volume Five* (1990, Concord) Solo piano, mostly a standards program, with two originals near the end (plus one earlier). Nothing particularly bad about it, but I'm not much of a solo piano fan, and this doesn't quite fit my expectations for Cowell, who I don't regard as a standards guy. [5]

Ida Cox

Ida Cox: *The Essential* (1923-40, Classic Blues -01) Document has released five CDs worth of Cox's material, reduced to two in this package. Most of these were cut in 1923-27, but a 1939 session featured top jazz players (Hot Lips Page, J.C. Higginbotham, Edmond Hall, James P. Johnson/Fletcher Henderson, Charlie Christian, Artie Bernstein, and Lionel Hampton) and the 1940 session had more (Red Allen, Higginbotham, Hall, Cliff Jackson, Billy Taylor [bass, not the more famous pianist], Jimmy Hoskins). A 1938 session features members of Count Basie's band. The early sessions also feature first class jazz accompaniment (Lovie Austin, Johnny Dodds, Fletcher Henderson). "Weary Way Blues" has some marvelous clarinet. [+]

Kenny Cox

Introducing Kenny Cox and the Contemporary Jazz Quintet (1968-69, Blue Note -07) A no-name hard bop crew from Detroit, cut two albums sandwiched together on one disc here, then mostly vanished -- a couple showed up on an MC5 record, and hung out with Phil Ranelin's Tribe, and much later Cox appeared on James Carter's *Live at Baker's Keyboard Lounge*; actually, they're sharp and lively, especially trumpeter Charles Moore. [8]

Marilyn Crispell

Marilyn Crispell: *Live in Berlin* (1982, Black Saint -84) One piece on first side, two on second, all brawling, scrapping free jazz, the pianist doing her best Cecil Taylor impression, Peter Kowald and John Betsch hitting back, the quartet filled out with violinist Billy Bang, stuck between a horn role and the bassist, not amped loud enough to take over the album, but very much in the thick of things. [7]

Marilyn Crispell: *Pianosolo: A Concert in Berlin* (1983, FMP -84) Avant-pianist, early in her career, attacks the piano boldly, with thick, resonant chords and choppy melodic runs. [7]

Marilyn Crispell: *Selected Works: 1983-1986: Solo Duo Quartet* (1983-86, Leo -2CD -01) Part of the label's "Golden Years of New Jazz" series, starting off solo piano (6 cuts, 48:15), adding drummer Doug James (7 cuts, 43:31), and finishing with a 38:00 bass-cello-drums quartet improvisation; she is rarely less than riveting, James is growing on me, and the strings just make the piano that much more percussive. [9]

Marilyn Crispell/Reggie Workman/Doug James: *Gaia* (1987, Leo -88) Avant-piano trio, starts cautiously but when she picks up speed she is dazzling, breaking only to let the bassist work up some serious mojo (and to give James a crashing solo). [9]

Marilyn Crispell Trio: *Live in Zürich* (1989, Leo -90) Piano trio, with Reggie Workman and Paul Motian, two who know a lot about filling out and balancing off a piano trio, although for once the drummer doesn't make it look easy -- Crispell's crisp, deep, muscular, and prickly piano keeps him on his toes. [9]

Marilyn Crispell: *Live in San Francisco* (1987-89, Music & Arts -90) Eight solo pieces, including Monk, Coltrane, "When I Fall in Love" -- exacting, but not at his most exciting -- followed by two live-but-non-SF curiosities: a 10:10 duet with Anthony Braxton (mostly on flute), and a 5:30 group led by Reggie Workman with Jeanne Lee singing and Don Byron on clarinet. [7]

Marilyn Crispell & Irène Schweizer: *Overlapping Hands: Eight Segments* (1990, FMP) Two major avant-garde pianists, improvising with, around, and against each other, full of dazzling runs and occasional wrecks; definitely, life in the fast lane. [8]

Marilyn Crispell/Georg Graewe: *Piano Duets* (1991, Leo -2CD -92) A piano pairing even more resourceful than the previous year's *Overlapping Hands* with Irène Schweizer, probably because Graewe dissimilarity offers a more complementary approach; the "tuned pianos" of the first disc give way to "detuned pianos" on the second without any calamity, as both pianists take what the machines give, turning surprise into delight. [9]

Marilyn Crispell: *Highlights From the 1992 American Tour* (1992, Music & Arts -93) Seven piano trio cuts with Reggie Workman and Gerry Hemingway, from four tour stops, the title unclear from the

cover -- Rhapsody goes with a song list, starting with "Suite for Two"; the suite is less compelling than the rhythm grind, which picks up on the second half. [8]

Marilyn Crispell: *Stellar Pulsations/Three Composers* (1992, Leo -93) Cover continues, "Music by Robert Cogan/Pozzi Escot/Manfred Niehaus," so those are the composers; Ellen Polansky is also credited with piano on the rigorous first piece; Crispell is joined by Don Byron and Gerry Hemingway for the chamberish second, and the entire WDR Radio Orchestra swims up the Third Stream on the finale, "Concerto for Marilyn" -- punctuated, of course, by some exceptional piano. [5]

Marilyn Crispell/Tim Berne: *Inference* (1992, Music & Arts -95) Piano-alto sax duo; Crispell's piano is so dense, so harmonically rich, so percussive that she covers much of what a bass and/or drums would do, but the sax holds center stage, and at this point in his career Berne tended to irritate as well as intrigue. [6]

Marilyn Crispell/Anders Jormin/Raymond Strid: *Spring Tour* (1994, Alice -95) Piano trio cut in Sweden, home turf for the others; all three contribute songs, with Jormin's genteel avant-ambiance already pointing him toward ECM; the pianist obliges by forgoing her pyrotechnics in favor of lighter, subtler abstractions. [7]

Marilyn Crispell: *Live at Mills College, 1995* (1995, Music & Arts) Live solo piano, four long cuts -- one by Monk, one a standards medley, two originals -- plus a short one called "Drums"; not much reason to prefer this over similar records, except when she gets rowdy, which happens often enough. [8]

Marilyn Crispell: *The Woodstock Concert* (1995, Music & Arts -96) Another solo, less than three months after *Live at Mills College*, two months before the superb *Contrasts: Live at Yoshi's (1995)*, even more of a tour de force -- "In Lingering Air" multiplies her percussion and harmonics into something wondrous, a level she returns to time and again, but by then even a relatively quiet stretch pulls you in. [10]

Marilyn Crispell: *Contrasts: Live at Yoshi's 27 June 1995* (1995, Music & Arts -96) Solo piano, highly touted in the Penguin Guide: "The Yoshi's gig from the club in Oakland is interesting in being more obviously jazz-based than anything she has released in recent years. That Bill Evans remains a constant presence, perhaps more important to her now than either Coltrane or Braxton were in past years, seems obvious. That she has assimilated his work and taken it on a step is equally clear. What is intriguing about numbers like "Flutter" and "Ruthie's Song" is how straightforward and full-hearted they seem. Gone for the time being at least are the dense, dark washes and the battering-ram tonality. Crispell has found the courage to be simple, and it becomes her wonderfully well." The following year she started recording for ECM, where simple is a watchword. Here she does an Annette Peacock piece (anticipating her first ECM), two Evans pieces, one by Mark Helias, and "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," as well as her own work. [9]

Marilyn Crispell/Stefano Maltese: *Red* (1999, Black Saint -00) Sicilian saxophonist, plays soprano, alto, and tenor here, plus bass clarinet, has more than a dozen albums but little you'll find outside Italy; the first of two duos with the pianist, good-natured exploration without a lot of clash. [6]

Sonny Criss

An alto saxophonist, picked up bebop in Charlie Parker's immediate wake, recorded in erratic but

impressive spurts -- 1956 for Imperial, 1966-69 for Prestige, 1975-76 for Muse -- but his last two albums for Impulse served him poorly before his tragic death at age 50.

Sonny Criss: *The Joy of Sax* (1976, Impulse) The synths, strings, and electric pulse are bogus trimmings, but at least this focuses on the sax, and his appeal is strong and clear. Two Stevie Wonder songs, one with a tolerable vocal. [5]

Sonny Criss: *Warm and Sonny* (1976, Impulse) More keybs, more synths, more backing horns, songs like "The Way We Were" and "Sweet Summer Breeze" and EWF's "That's the Way of the World" -- goop that the alto sax can only occasionally rise above, and rarely does. [2]

Bing Crosby

The Essential Bing Crosby: The Columbia Years (1931-34, Columbia/Legacy -03) He was an astonishingly good singer, but his compromise between jazzbo and superstardom leaves me wishing for more jazz, or at least more Mills Brothers; a thin slice of a remarkable career. [+]

Bing Crosby: *Bing With a Beat* (1957, Bluebird -04) Not a big beat here, but Bob Scobey's band swings easy, providing consistent support, which is all Crosby needs to run through a quick set of elegant standards. [9]

Bing Crosby/Rosemary Clooney: *Fancy Meeting You Here* (1958-59, Bluebird -01) A set of travel songs backed by Billy May, who can turn out a little mambo beat anytime the itinerary threatens to go south. [7]

Bing Crosby & Louis Armstrong: *Bing & Satchmo* (1960, Capitol -09) Given his gravel voice, the thing that always surprises you about Armstrong is how precise and nimble his singing was, holding his own even against the supremely fluid Crosby. The pair sang together on occasional 1940s singles for Decca, which were both jazzier and cornier than anything here. Blame it on Billy May, whose arrangements and orchestra explore new levels in self-caricature, but enjoy the singers nonetheless. [7]

Celia Cruz

Celia Cruz con la Sonora Matancera: *La Guarachera de Cuba* (1950-53, Tumbao -98): Mostly guarachas, a song and dance form derived from 19th century comic theatre; Cruz was on her way to becoming one of Cuba's top vocalists, while the Matanceras gently usher her along. [8]

Joe Cuba

The Joe Cuba Sextet: *Wanted Dead or Alive (Bang! Bang! Push, Push, Push)* (1967, Fania) Born in New York in 1931, of Puerto Rican descent, Cuba played congas and developed an abbreviated, upbeat strain of salsa, making him "The Father of Latin Boogaloo"; the refrains here are almost cartoonish, which works for novelty, but the rhythm is lightyears beyond what we're used to. [9]

Julio Cueva

Julio Cueva y Su Orquesta: *La Butuba Cubana* (1943-45, Tumbao -94) Led by a trumpet player, back in Cuba after getting caught up in the Spanish Civil War; not all that brassy, but most vocals are

by guaracha specialist "Cascarita," who also appears on two cuts with Bebo Valdés. [8]

Julio Cueva y Su Orchesta: *Desintegrando* (1944-47, Tumbao -96) Cascarita, né Orlando Guerra, sings all but the last four cuts here, all but one guarachas, played loose and bouncy; Cueva's trumpet seems more up front here, as are his left politics, enjoying a brief vogue when the PSP (People's Socialist Party) featured his band on their radio station. [9]

Ted Curson

Ted Curson: *Blue Piccolo* (1976, Why Not -09) A bright, vibrant hard bop trumpeter who spent much of his long career on the margins of the avant-garde, consigned there as much by a collapsing jazz market he got to too late as anything else, not that his early association with Eric Dolphy hurt; a brisk quartet with Jim McNeely tinkling the ivories, with Cecil McBee on bass and Steve McCall on drums; piccolo refers to his tiny trumpet. [8]

Ted Curson: *Traveling On* (1996, Evidence) This splits into 3-4 four pieces, the confusion being that the two slow elegies (a long "Tears for Dolphy" at the end of the first slice, and a slightly shorter ode to Booker Ervin to close the album) are separated. The first slice is a set of latin tunes, which Curson plays brightly over. After "Tears for Dolphy" (I could have done without Mark Gross' flute there) and a mediation on Mingus, the other slice is a set of three tunes with Curson vocals: "Watermelon Man," "When the Saints Go Marching In," and "Flip Flop and Fly" -- of the three I'm always a sucker for "Saints," especially in the hands of a good trumpet player. The latin stuff is a strong start, and the ode at the end is lovely. The rest is rather mixed. [5]

Andrew Cyrille

Andrew Cyrille/Peter Brötzmann: *Andrew Cyrille Meets Brötzmann in Berlin* (1982, FMP -83) Duo, with Cyrille on drums and Brötzmann rotating between tenor sax, baritone sax, tarogato, and E-flat clarinet. Not sure which of the latter is responsible for an extended high-pitch barrage, but it's a bit much to handle. Brötzmann is no less combative on any other horn, but the others make more sense, and draw Cyrille out more. Won't make him any new friends, but very impressive as these things go. [8]

Andrew Cyrille: *The Navigator* (1982, Soul Note) One of the great drummers, but like most drummer records the front line sets the sound. This one has trumpet/piano/bass, which makes it nice and bright, almost classic. [+]

Andrew Cyrille: *X-Man* (1993, Soul Note) And this one has flute/guitar/bass, which makes it soft and supple, not nearly so classic. [5]

Tadd Dameron

Tadd Dameron With John Coltrane: *Mating Call* (1956, Prestige -07) In retrospect, as the only horn working with a set of Dameron's songs, Coltrane makes an especially strong show of his early, Dexter Gordon-influenced style, exhibiting a rough hewn muscularity that gets the best of Dameron's usually refined taste. [7]

Barbara Dane

Barbara Dane: *Anthology of American Folk Songs* (1959, Empire Music Group -06) Political singer, trained her voice to project from picket lines, then as she turned pro gravitated to jazz, working with George Lewis and Kid Ory, and blues, working with Lightnin' Hopkins, but cut this one album of thirteen trad folk songs plus two by known authors -- A.P. Carter and Woody Guthrie, solid and forthright but more important unflinching. [9]

Ted Daniel

Ted Daniel Quintet: *Tapestry* (1974, Porter -08) Flugelhorn specialist, hung in the New York lofts during the dark days of 1970s jazz, sneaking out this and a couple more albums; Khan Jamal's vibes sparkle in the dense jungle undergrowth of keyb-bass-drums, with Daniel playing rough when the going gets tough, eloquent when the scenery turns luxuriant. [7]

Bobby Darin

Splish Splash: The Best of Bobby Darin Volume One (1958-71, Atco -91) They held back "Mack the Knife," "Beyond the Sea," "Clementine," and others to salt a second volume, although the division is stylistic as well. This one has Darin's more rockish things -- "Splish Splash," "Dream Lover," various things deriving from Ray Charles. All but the last three cuts here date from 1958-61, after which Darin moved on to Capitol. Darin was a talented singer, but these things don't cohere into much -- "Dream Lover," especially, sounds like a perfect Ricky Nelson hit, but nothing else does. This one charts better than Volume Two: 16 chart songs, 6 top ten, vs. 6 and 2 on Volume Two. But Atlantic was a great rock label, so that's the direction he steered him towards -- not necessarily where he wanted to go. [5]

Mack the Knife: The Best of Bobby Darin Volume Two (1958-61, Atco -91) After Darin went to Capitol he tried his hand as a swinging big band singer -- the trade of idols like Sinatra, but a declining proposition in the '60s. These are early steps in that direction, including his biggest hit ("Mack the Knife"), the signature song Kevin Spacey tapped for his biopic title ("Beyond the Sea"), and a bunch of hard-swinging standards -- "Clementine" and "Artificial Flowers" are particularly effective, and even "Bill Bailey Won't You Please Come Home" works. This seems to be more his thing. [+]

Bobby Darin: *Live From Las Vegas* (1963, Capitol -05) Three things stand out: he disposes of his Atlantic hits, excepting "Mack the Knife," in a 2:53 medley -- standard practice, but rarely so perfunctory; he murders Johnny Cash's "I Walk the Line" for cheap laughs; finally he spends 9:32 on his Hollywood impersonations backed by "One for My Baby" -- Bogart and Cagney were staples of every two-bit comic, but now they're just dated clichés. [5]

The Swinging Side of Bobby Darin (1962-65, Capitol Jazz -05) Atlantic groomed him as a rock star, but Capitol lured him away with an offer he couldn't resist: they auditioned him for Frank Sinatra's vacancy, and he was smashing, swinging with Billy May's powerhouse orchestra, winding his way through Bob Florence's more delicate arrangements; the songbook is a bit obvious, the time had past, and he didn't stick with it, but for a moment it was all he ever wanted to do; short (31:02). [9]

The Legendary Bobby Darin (1962-73, Capitol -04) Past his initial rock hits (some reprised live, some very briefly), he croons competently in front of anonymous big bands and covers trifling pop songs of

the day. [+]

Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis

Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis & Johnny Griffin Quintet: *Live at Minton's Playhouse in New York City: Complete Recordings* (1961, Fresh Sound -2CD -12) Christgau credits Griffin for the first sax solo that he ever tuned into, and it's easy to back up from Griffin to Bird: he bought the whole package, especially the speed, an even meaner trick on tenor; Davis was another combative tenor saxophonist, eager to mix it up with anyone any time -- his *Very Saxy*, with Hawkins, Cobb, and Tate, may be the most exciting pure blowing session on record; Prestige mined these sets for four LPs, starting with *The Tenor Scene*, but as you see now, they never took a break. [9]

The Best of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (1958-62, Prestige -04) Davis worked big bands from Cootie Williams to Count Basie to Oliver Nelson, but mostly raised hell in small organ groups, with Shirley Scott present on eight of twelve cuts here, and Don Patterson on two more. What's missing are his multi-sax jams like *The Tenor Scene* with Johnny Griffin and *Very Saxy* with Buddy Tate, Arnett Cobb, and Coleman Hawkins. [9]

Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis: *Light and Lovely* (1977, Black & Blue) A fine mainstream session -- Davis was always a solid player, and the presence of Sweets Edison here is an added treat. [+]

Jesse Davis

Jesse Davis: *From Within* (1996, Concord) Davis is an alto saxophonist who is somewhere in the mainstream these days: he was a student of Ellis Marsalis, so you might even slot him slightly right of mainstream, as these things go. He picked up an extraordinary band for this date: Lewis Nash (drums), Ron Carter (bass), Hank Jones (piano), Nicholas Payton (trumpet). He plays beautifully, in a rather relaxed style. The whole album is very relaxed, with the solo work by Jones perhaps the most appreciated. The only thing I don't much like is the ensemble sound, although Payton and especially Davis get in good solos when they get the chance. [+]

Jesse Davis: *First Insight* (1998, Concord) Mainstream tenor saxophonist, from Marsalis-ville but sweeter than Branford, produced a steady flow of albums on Concord 1991-2000 but has rarely been heard from since, a shame; bright, effortless swing, knows his Kansas City as well as New Orleans, has a stellar band anchored by Kenny Washington; sings one, does a pretty good job. [8]

Miles Davis

Miles Davis/Sonny Rollins: *Dig* (1951, Prestige/OJC -10) Davis's first album for Prestige, "featuring" Rollins -- released as a 10-inch at the time, reissued as an LP in 1956, with two bonus cuts added to the 1991 CD; he was 25 at the time, Rollins 21, and Jackie McLean 19; basic bebop, most a dense thrash of rhythm with long, fast horn runs; the slower ones more articulate. [7]

Miles Davis: *Birdland 1951* (1951, Blue Note -04) Breakneck bebop typical of bands paddling in Charlie Parker's wake, in this case full of future greats not great yet (excepting the indispensable Art Blakey); sound quality is marginal, content of historical interest. [4]

Miles Davis: *The Very Best: The Early Years* (1949-54, Blue Note -05) Spoiled rich kid moves to New

York to hang with Charlie Parker and shoot skag. Catches break fronting for Gil Evans, getting credit for inventing cool jazz. Fronts band for Art Blakey and Horace Silver, getting credit for inventing hard bop. His early years were 70% dumb luck, and he never stopped getting credit for other folks' genius, but his own genius was never to be far from the spotlight, and never to be so undeserving of his fame that he could easily be dismissed. Ends ironically with a great, and not so early, Davis song issued under Cannonball Adderley's name. [+]

Steamin' With the Miles Davis Quintet (1956, Prestige -07) The fourth LP carved from the two sessions that marked Davis's move from indie Prestige to major Columbia, a kiss-off of quickly recorded standards that in retrospect were recognized as his first great Quintet, with John Coltrane, Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones emerging; a random mix of songs, each standing out on its own. [9]

Miles Davis at Newport 1958 (1958, Columbia/Legacy -01) The group is the same that cut *Kind of Blue* in 1959, but the sound is more akin to 1958's *Milestones* -- the changes being that Bill Evans replaced Red Garland, and Jimmy Cobb replaced Philly Joe Jones. *Kind of Blue* marked the discovery of modal improvisations, which became a Coltrane signature, and launched him into a second and far more notable phase of his career. *Milestones*, on the other hand, was one of Davis' most boppish sets. Many regard it as a major work, but the last time I played it was near the height of my anti-bop phase, and I pegged it at B+. That's no doubt something to revisit one of these days. But this live date sounds more like how I remember *Milestones*. The bop heritage is obvious as the first piece is Charlie Parker's "Ah-Leu-Cha," followed by Monk's "Straight, No Chaser." While the former is obviously Parker's work, the latter is less evidently Monk's. A Davis piece, "Fran-Dance," follows, starting with a trumpet theme over a more relaxed beat, followed by a particularly lucid Coltrane solo. It's the best thing here, but the next cut is a Dizzy Gillespie credit, and we're back to the races. Still, I think that the problem here isn't the horns -- Davis and Coltrane grew up on this shit, even if they were never all that good at it. Rather, it's the drummer, whose banging rarely hits the beat. "Bye Bye Blackbird" gives Davis and especially Coltrane a better chance to improvise, and Evans takes an interesting but more subdued solo. A Davis-composed "Theme" follows, short and hard to distinguish. The entire set weighs in just over 40 minutes, including introductions. Davis cut some great records around this time, but this is a mixed bag at best. [5]

The Miles Davis All-Stars: *Broadcast Sessions 1958-59* (1958-59, Acrobat -08) Ten tracks from four sessions, with John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley missing one each, pianists ranging from Bill Evans to Red Garland to Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers on bass except for the cut Candido drops in on; no surprises, at least until Coltrane catches fire on the last cuts, reminiscent of Bird's Roosts. [7]

Miles Davis: *Sketches of Spain* (1959, Columbia/Legacy -09) [7]

Miles Davis: *Sketches of Spain [Legacy Edition]* (1959-60, Columbia/Legacy 2CD -09) The third of three major collaborations between Davis and Gil Evans, following *Miles Ahead* and *Porgy and Bess*. Spiced with Spanish themes, leading off with Joaquin Rodrigo's slow and moody "Concierto de Aranjuez (Adagio)" -- 16:20 on the original album -- and fleshed out with Evans compositions. The first disc leaves the album intact, signing off after 45:36. Evans keeps his cleverness under tight wraps, producing a subtle background tapestry that never distracts you from the leader's trumpet -- the saving grace here. The second disc adds 70:10 of alternate takes and miscellaneous scraps -- more of the same, but without the flow. [5]

Miles Davis: *Seven Steps to Heaven* (1963, Columbia/Legacy -05) A restart after a dead spot in Miles' career, with George Coleman, Victor Feldman and Ron Carter -- the latter the first step toward the second great quintet; tentative is the word, with tinny ballads and undeveloped songs. [5]

Miles Davis Quintet: *Live at the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival* (1963, MJF -07) Early into the second great Davis Quintet, with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams on board, along with George Coleman on tenor sax; compared to the live albums from 1964, this seems tentative and thin, reworking old repertoire, with a few hints of the future. [+]

Miles Davis: *Miles Davis in Europe* (1963, Columbia/Legacy -05) Herbie Hancock and 17-year-old Tony Williams add two more pieces and get to show their wares, with the whole band cohering on older pieces like "Milestones"; a good show, done fast and loose, not fancy. [+]

Miles Davis: *My Funny Valentine* (1964, Columbia/Legacy -05) Rushed to the Lovers Market, this was the Philharmonic Hall concert where four-fifths of the future Miles Davis Quintet got it together -- the fifth being George Coleman, who also kicks ass. [9]

Miles Davis: *"Four" and More* (1964, Columbia/Legacy -05) Six months later, half of a New York Philharmonic concert that also yielded *My Funny Valentine*; a much tighter group, state of the art hard bop, and a fine showcase for George Coleman. [9]

Miles Davis: *Miles in Tokyo* (1964, Columbia/Legacy -05) George Coleman gave way to Wayne Shorter, but for this one trip Sam Rivers took over the tenor sax slot, giving Davis an experience with a much freer player, an intriguing path not taken; Rivers is on his best behavior, coming up with an attractive performance. [9]

Miles Davis: *My Funny Valentine* (1964, Columbia/Legacy -05) Carved from the *Seven Steps* box and rushed to the Lovers Market (Valentine's Day, get it?), this was the Philharmonic Hall concert where four-fifths of the future Miles Davis Quintet got it together -- the other fifth being George Coleman, also in fine form. [9]

Miles Davis: *Miles in Berlin* (1964, Columbia/Legacy -05) The arrival of Wayne Shorter marked the emergence of Miles' second great quintet, which went on to produce major albums for the rest of the decade; the band meshes elegantly on the usual songbook here, the chemistry of the rhythm section fully formed, with Miles in particularly fine form. [9]

Seven Steps: The Complete Columbia Recordings of Miles Davis 1963-1964 (1963-64, Columbia/Legacy -7CD -04) Seven discs, starting with a nondescript L.A. studio session released as *Seven Steps to Heaven*, stepping through a series of live recordings including the date in Berlin when Wayne Shorter completed the Quintet, the most famous Davis group of all. As the pieces come together -- Ron Carter from the start, Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams to finish the studio album in New York -- the band starts to sizzle and Davis plays as imaginatively as ever. In retrospect one likes to see this period as transitional, but the one disc with Shorter is anticlimactic. One thing this box should do is give George Coleman, who plays tenor sax on five discs here, some well deserved respect. Even more intriguing is the road not taken: Sam Rivers lights up the stage in Tokyo, prodding Davis to play as far out as he ever got. All but six cuts are previously released, but only the studio album has been in print recently. When/if this gets cut up, look first for the Antibes and Japan sets. [9]

Miles Davis: *The Best of Seven Steps: The Complete Recordings of Miles Davis 1963-1964* (1963-64, Columbia/Legacy -05): The inevitable sampler for the 7-CD box set, now (less a few alternate

takes) also available separately; this was a period of transition when Miles returned to the road from a hiatus and assembled his famous late '60s quintet -- Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Tony Williams, all stars not least due to their association with Miles and each other; the box is a detail study, much of its interest historical, although the music holds up fine, and there's nothing wrong with the sampler except, perhaps, that it blurs the transitions. [9]

Miles Davis: *Love Songs* (1957-64, Columbia/Legacy -99) One of the first items in this series, a rather predictable collection of early Miles ballads, with two restrained Gil Evans big band arrangements and various quintets; although saxophonists are present, the focus is squarely on Miles' trumpet, which has rarely sounded dryer. [7]

Miles Davis: *Bitches Brew Live* (1969-70, Columbia/Legacy -11) Something of a misnomer, combining three previously unreleased cuts from a pre-*Bitches Brew* July 1969 performance at Newport with six from an Isle of Wight set the following August. Neither group matches the album band -- Wayne Shorter, John McLaughlin, and Joe Zawinul are among the missing -- nor do the songs line up. The former group was stripped down with Chick Corea, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette; the latter was buffed up, adding Gary Bartz, Keith Jarrett (on organ), and Airtio Moreira. So this is basically yet another live set from the period when Davis made his transition from hard bop to fusion, and from dingy jazz clubs to stadia. Pretty hot one, too; all the more confusing since I mostly recall *Bitches Brew* as our favorite chill-out album of the early 1970s. [8]

Miles Davis: *The Cellar Door Sessions 1970* (1970, Columbia/Legacy -6CD -05) Virtually every jazz critic who compiled a top ten list for 2005 picked one or more records by guys long dead: Thelonious Monk/John Coltrane, *At Carnegie Hall*; Dizzy Gillespie/Charlie Parker, *Town Hall*; John Coltrane, *Live at the Half Note*. These items continue a well established pattern, which is that we view jazz as a music of the past, played by legends who with few exceptions are no longer with us. (Sonny Rollins also got votes for an unearthed 2001 concert.) But Miles Davis is the reigning champion of past legends, probably the best-selling widely respected jazz man of the past 10, 20, 30 years. Sony/Legacy has been mining Davis tapes assiduously for quite a while now, releasing two 6-CD boxes just this year. The reason Davis didn't make the year-end lists is that these are large boxes expanded from a core of previously released music, whereas the above-listed are one- or two-disc sets with no previously released music (the Coltrane has been bootlegged). But he fits the pattern. However, I have a different theory how this works. For one thing, all of these musicians come from the 1945-60 period, the bebop era if you like, where there is much consensus about who's great. (Anyone who hated bebop fled the club when Bird got on stage, leaving those who stayed free to define what jazz means.) Those greats are the revered founders, and their devotees have an apparently insatiable desire to study them. On the other hand, no such consensus exists for anything that came after 1960 -- new thing, fusion, even Marsalis-style conservatism. Even Davis catches flack once you get past his late-'60s quintet, although his early fusion period (1969-74) has been explored at considerable length, with five 2-CD live sets, box-length expansions of *In a Silent Way*, *Bitches Brew* and *Jack Johnson*, and now this box, which provides for raw context for the first of the live sets to be released, the heavily edited *Live-Evil*. A little more than half of *Live-Evil* was selected from the fourth of four nights Davis played at DC's Cellar Door shortly before Christmas 1970. The fourth night was notable as the one night with John McLaughlin in the band. [9]

Miles Davis: *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* (1970, Columbia/Legacy -05) Cleaned up for 2003's *Complete Jack Johnson Sessions* box set, which laid out all the working tracks before this ultimate edit;

treated cavalierly by the label at the time, this survives as the toughest, most muscular, most dramatic of all the records Davis made in his Electric Period -- a career pinnacle to rival *Kind of Blue*. [10]

Miles Davis *Live at the Fillmore East (March 7, 1970)* (1970, Columbia/Legacy -2CD -01) An afterthought to Columbia's 5*2CD orgy of live Miles-goes-electric, this one is extra-harsh both in sound and concept. [5]

Walter Davis Jr.

Walter Davis Jr.: *Davis Cup* (1959, Blue Note -07) A minor hard bop pianist's one and only shot on Blue Note, Davis wrote all the pieces and called his chits in, getting Donald Byrd and Jackie McLean to fill out his quintet; McLean's alto sax lays back, letting Byrd's trumpet dominate to such an extent that you barely notice the fine piano. [5]

Elton Dean

Elton Dean: *Just Us* (1971-72, Cuneiform -98) Saxophonists in rock bands almost always relate to jazz first, and Dean's rock band, the Soft Machine, was more than half-way there. So these sessions are something of a side project. They come from a historical juncture when England was simultaneously developing an avant-garde and building on the fusion groove that Miles Davis and John McLaughlin developed independently and together. This fits the time -- the underlying rhythm is fusion, especially in Neville Whitehead's electric bass -- but the horns point outward, especially Mark Charig's cornet and Nick Evans' trombone. Dean eventually moved firmly into the avant orbit, so his relative tameness here can be seen as transitional. An interesting document from interesting times. [7]

Elton Dean: *Moorsong* (1998-99, Cuneiform -01) The Soft Machine's saxophonist has put together a long and evidently notable career without me ever paying much attention. This is one of many points along the way -- hard to judge in itself. Strikes me as a bit overcomplex, but saxophonist holds up well. [+]

Blossom Dearie

Blossom Dearie (1956-59, Verve -89) Minimal, sensitive trio sessions, which set her plain, polite voice to great advantage. Ray Brown and Jo Jones swing as expected. The previously unreleased cuts are a mixed blessing. [+]

Joey DeFrancesco

Joey DeFrancesco: *Where Were You?* (1990, Columbia) I remember sometime around 1990 some writer claiming that it's no accident that *all* the major jazz organ players are black. At the time I was listening to Barbara Dennerlein, who isn't, but over the subsequent decade DeFrancesco, who also isn't, was the one who emerged as jazz's best-known young organist. This is an early album, but he's moved far out of the usual soul jazz rut, mostly into big band terrain. I find that overkill, but guest shots by John Scofield and especially Illinois Jacquet are welcome. [5]

Jack DeJohnette

Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition: *Album Album* (1984, ECM) Horn-heavy quintet, with John Purcell (alto/soprano sax), David Murray (tenor sax), Howard Johnson (tuba/baritone sax), and Rufus Reid (acoustic/electric bass). On the downside I find that I don't like the sax section playing at all -- Purcell's smaller saxes sound tinny, and Johnson's bottom washes out, but Murray's solos are pretty impressive. There's just not enough of them to put the album album over. [5]

Deodato

Deodato: *Prelude* (1972, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) Brazilian pianist, had some bossa nova records in the 1960s before coming to America and producing this novelty fusion extravaganza, with its opening hook a sambafied take on "Also Sprach Zarathustra"; Taylor threw everything he had into the mix: strings, brass, flutes, two French horns, a lot of electric guitar and bass, and a gaggle of percussionists -- Billy Cobham, Airto Moreira, and Ray Barretto; biggest surprise is that it mostly holds together. [7]

Paul Desmond

Paul Desmond: *Desmond Blue* (1961-62, RCA -02) One of those "sax with strings" albums, where the strings are so dull and uninteresting at first you try to tune them out and focus on the alto sax, then eventually they fade so completely into the background they cease to annoy. Meanwhile, Desmond just gets more and more gorgeous, as he's wont to do. The 2002 reissue adds a lot of alternate takes: on the plus side they let the whole effect settle in; on the other hand, you wonder if they'll ever end. [7]

Paul Desmond/Gerry Mulligan: *Two of a Mind* (1962, Bluebird -03) In its original edition this was one of the best things that either principal ever did. Mulligan could get a light, spritely sound even on the usually heavyweight baritone sax, and few musicians in jazz history have been so attentive to their fellows, especially to other saxophonists. Desmond had a beautiful tone on alto, a marvelous light touch, and an outstanding sense of how to fit in harmonically. Mulligan was perhaps best known for his work with the mercurial Chet Baker, while Desmond is often regarded as an extra appendage to Dave Brubeck -- in both cases they seem to have been the anchor that kept their partners in line. Playing together must have been a delight: their 1957 Verve *Quartet* is superb, and this later meeting is, if anything, even more delightful. Bluebird has let an earlier, budget edition of these sessions lapse from their catalog. This one is fluffed out with five bonus tracks, almost doubling the length, and, unfortunately, the price is also ratched up. The bonus cuts are just more of a good thing. [10]

Paul Desmond: *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (1969, Verve -08) A whole album of Simon & Garfunkle covers, tricked up as easy listening schmaltz by producer Don Sebesky, with Desmond playing so sweet your teeth hurt; at least nobody felt compelled to sing along. [1]

Paul Desmond: *Pure Desmond* (1974, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) The alto saxophonist at his most gorgeous, but hardly pure given how much space is given over to the easy gait and shimmery tone of Ed Bickert's guitar; Ron Carter and Connie Kay keep time, never letting anyone break a sweat. [5]

Trudy Desmond

A Dream Come True: The Best of Trudy Desmond (1988-98, Just a Memory -05) She was a standards

singer (a cabaret singer) who cut four albums before cancer took her life in 1999. Don't know much more than that: when or where she was born, etc. Haven't heard the four albums, but this is probably an apt summary. The four albums are evenly divided into seventeen cuts, then shuffled seamlessly. She has a light touch, and gets solid support, including Bill Charlap on one album. A very sparse take on "I Got Rhythm" is one of the highlights. As usual, the songs make the singer, and Cole Porter does especially well for her. [8]

Walt Dickerson

Walt Dickerson: *Tell Us Only the Beautiful Things* (1975, Why Not -09) A vibraphonist, made a splash in the early 1960s, then dropped out for a decade before returning here, on two long improvs in an edge trio with Wilbur Ware on bass and Andrew Cyrille on percussion; starts tentatively solo, but picks up speed and power, especially from Cyrille. [8]

Al DiMeola

Al DiMeola/John McLaughlin/Paco DeLucia: *Friday Night in San Francisco* (1980, Columbia/Legacy -97) This one lists DiMeola first; the second meeting of these three listed McLaughlin first. DeLucia is actually the real master of Spanish guitar, but isn't nearly as well known in these parts. The first cut runs 11:31 and is frankly amazing: rarely has acoustic guitar been played with so much frenzy and intensity, with the three adding up to something that Art Tatum would have been impressed by. The crowd noises just add to the amazement. You wonder how they can keep it up; well, they don't. The second cut falls into quoting something that sounds like the Pink Panther theme. The later cuts flash some fancy guitar, but never quite amaze like the first one. [+]

Bruce Ditmas

Bruce Ditmas: *What If* (1994, Postcards -95) Ditmas is a drummer with a relatively slim resume -- early '70s work with Gil Evans, Jaco Pastorius, and Paul Bley; some '80s work with Enrico Rava; a couple of '90s albums with Paul Bley. This seems to be the only record issued under his own name, and he owns or shares all of the composition credits here. Yet this turns out to be a pretty remarkable album. The three big-name members of the band are major factors in this, but unknown bassist Dominic Richards is equally prominent, and makes a major contribution. And the big names aren't ones that you normally expect to fit together: John Abercrombie (guitar), Paul Bley (piano/synth), and Sam Rivers (tenor/soprano sax). Bley and Rivers show up from time to time, and are very much themselves, major league in this or any other context. But the guy who really glues this together is Abercrombie, who doesn't sound like the airy ECM artist he's become -- he sounds like the next Mahavishnu he was headed towards when he started out. [9]

Bill Dixon

Bill Dixon: *November 1981* (1981, Soul Note -82) Avant-garde trumpet player, gained some fame (or notoriety) playing with Cecil Taylor in the 1960s, cut a series of intimate and difficult albums for Soul Note 1980-98, and staged a surprising comeback with big band albums from 2007 to his death in 2010. This is backed by two bassists (Alan Silva and Mario Pavone) and drums (Laurence Cook), the basses a

complex, bubbling substrate for the trumpet to cut against, or just bounce along; and when they do cut back, the trumpet looms even more eloquently. [9]

Bill Dixon: *Thoughts* (1985, Soul Note -87) A rather murky production for a relatively large production -- Marco Eineidi on alto sax, John Buckingham on tuba, Lawrence Cook on drums, and three great bassists -- Mario Pavone, William Parker, and Peter Kowald; Dixon's trumpet is as scrawny as ever, and while no one doubts that a lot of thought went into it, there is very little here to pique your interest. [4]

Bill Dixon: *Son of Sisyphus* (1988, Soul Note -90) Starts with Dixon playing piano, an uneventful twist before the trumpet takes over; with Mario Pavone on bass, Laurence Cook on percussion, and John Buckingham on tuba -- the tuba adding resonance as the trumpet picks its way through what is ultimately a long, slow slog. [5]

Bill Dixon with Tony Oxley: *Papyrus: Volume I* (1998, Soul Note -99) Trumpet-percussion duets, although Dixon again leads off with a bit of piano; it threatens to fall into the slow rut that makes so many of Dixon's Soul Notes so difficult; Oxley don't mind slow but can't stand lazy, so he keeps prodding and gets something interesting in return. [7]

Bill Dixon with Tony Oxley: *Papyrus: Volume II* (1998, Soul Note -00) A second volume of trumpet-percussion duets (with a bit of Dixon piano), from the same sessions, with similar results -- most critics downgrade these a bit but I don't find much difference, may even give this a slight edge. [7]

Bill Dixon: *Berlin Abbozzi* (1999, FMP -00): Ten years after the Berlin Wall fell, the avant-trumpeter pokes his way through the fog created by two bassists (Matthias Bauer and Klaus Koch) and drummer Tony Oxley; three long pieces -- the middle "Open Quiet/The Orange Bell" running 40:14 -- exhibit no great hurry; rather, an atmospheric tension ominous enough to rivet your attention but pregnant with sensual wonder. [9]

Baby Dodds

Baby Dodds: *Talking and Drum Solos* (1946-54, Atavistic -03) Footnotes to jazz history produced by Frederic Ramsey Jr.; old brass bands sounding ancient, King Oliver's drummer feeling spooky. [5]

Bill Doggett

The Very Best of Bill Doggett: Honky Tonk (1954-59, Collectables -04) For some reason, Rhino passed on Doggett back in 1993 when they had a brief shot at raiding the King Records vaults -- probably because Doggett's records were instrumentals, with twenty-some albums charting a mere three top-40 singles. "Honky Tonk (Parts 1 & 2)" was by far the biggest hit, a seminal piece of mid-'50s r&b, with Billy Butler's guitar line setting the table and Clifford Scott's honking sax rocking out. The big advantage of a Rhino package would have been a better discography, but they would have cheaped out on the tunes. [9]

Bill Doggett: *The Many Moods of Bill Doggett* (1961, King) Actually, nothing on the label or cover (open the "booklet" and all you see is white paper) indicate the date, which I got from AMG (caveat lector). A couple of vocal cuts break his norm, but they're all right, and he keeps pumping. [+]

Bill Doggett and His Combo: *Fingertips* (1963, Columbia/Legacy -13) Church pianist, worked for

Lucky Millinder and Louis Jordan before breaking out on his own, scoring a freak hit in 1956 ("Honky Tonk") and making dozens of albums, minor groovefests on organ like this one. [6]

Eric Dolphy

Eric Dolphy: *The Best of Eric Dolphy* (1960-61, Prestige -04) Started late, died young, giving him a career span of five years; played bass clarinet or flute as often as alto sax; most famous as a sideman for Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, with few albums under his own name (especially if you weed out the concerts uncovered after his death), but universally recognized as a major figure; this early selection leans to his bop roots, with half the cuts featuring ill-fated trumpeter Booker Little. [9]

Eric Dolphy: *Prestige Profiles* (1960-61, Prestige -05) More famous as a sideman, died young, making his string of records for Prestige all the more valuable; features brilliant trumpeter Booker Little, who died even younger. [9]

Lou Donaldson

Lou Donaldson: *Here 'Tis* (1961, Blue Note -08) A turning point as the alto saxophonist moves from Bird bebopper to soul jazzer, helped along by organ funkmeister Baby Face Willette and even more so by Grant Green's tasty guitar licks; not quite recognizing the challenge, Donaldson goes with the groove. [6]

Lou Donaldson: *Gravy Train* (1961, Blue Note -07): An alto saxophonist, Donaldson got a reputation early in the 1950s as a Charlie Parker imitator, but it's hard to hear the influence, especially by the early 1960s when his easy-flowing blues style fit snugly into the soul jazz milieu. The temptation to put him down as derivative may be because he never showed any big ambitions. He was content to knock off dozens of clean toned, easy grooving albums, popular enough that Blue Note kept him employed from 1952 to 1974. This one makes the most of his limits. Two originals are small ideas worked out comfortably. The covers carry stronger melodies, which he renders with little elaboration but uncommon elegance. Herman Foster's piano is crisper than the usual organs, while Alec Dorsey's congas lighten and loosen the beat. [9]

Lou Donaldson: *Midnight Creeper* (1968, Blue Note -00) Donaldson has a reputation as one of Charlie Parker's copycats, but all I've ever heard from him is blues-based boogaloo. This short one (five cuts, only one over 7:44, no bonuses) is delightful, the best I've heard, no doubt because the group -- Blue Mitchell (trumpet), George Benson (guitar), Lonnie Smith (organ), Idris Muhammad (drums) -- stands up even when Donaldson lays back. Benson would be a revelation for anyone who hasn't heard him before he started aping Stevie Wonder. [+]

Christy Doran

Christy Doran/John Wolf Brennan: *Henceforward* (1989, Leo Lab) Doran plays guitar; Brennan plays piano. Both are well-regarded in the *Penguin Guide*, and this was just a record that I ran across in a used store, and figured why not check 'em out. Turns out it's quite a record, the major revelation being how complementary Doran's guitar sound is to Brennan's piano and "prepared strings." Indeed, I wouldn't be surprised if Doran hasn't done something funny to his strings, but the odd tunings work because the music has so much rhythmic force. [9]

Christy Doran: *Corporate Art* (1991, Winter & Winter -04) Doran plays electric guitar. He's joined on electric bass by Mark Helias, who is a major avant acoustic bass player, but I've never seen him on electric elsewhere. Bobby Previte plays drums -- an ideal choice for an electric lineup. Gary Thomas plays tenor sax -- I'm not a big fan. Too bad I didn't take notes on this record. [+]

Kenny Dorham

Kenny Dorham: *The Flamboyant, Queens, NY, 1963* (1963, Uptown -10) Live radio shot of the trumpeter's hard bop quintet, with Joe Henderson on tenor sax and Ronnie Mathews on piano, not long before Dorham's health started to fail, leading to his death in 1972; two originals ("Straight Ahead" of course, and "Una Mas" showing his Latin flare), a couple of Gershwin standards, a lot of hot trumpet on the opener, three interruptions by MC Alan Grant. [8]

Kenny Dorham: *Trompeta Toccata* (1964, Blue Note -06) A hard bop trumpeter very fond of Latin rhythms, something he explored in 1955's *Afro-Cuban* and returned to frequently, including this his last album; Joe Henderson is a tower of strength on tenor sax, and Tootie Heath's cymbals suffice for the clave. [6]

Bob Dorough

Bob Dorough: *Right on My Way Home* (1997, Blue Note) An aging hipster; like ye olde masters of vocalese, he tends to flip and flop too much on the slippery slopes of be-bop, but the straighter material keeps his cleverness in check, and the band is superb. [+]

Tommy Dorsey

Tommy Dorsey: *The Early Jazz Sides: 1932-1937* (1932-37, Jazz Legends -04) The trombonist was a popular bandleader of the era, best known today for his 1940-42 association with Frank Sinatra. His early big band and the slightly smaller Clambake Seven played urbane, upbeat swing, with Bud Freeman's tenor sax a delight and Edythe Wright's occasional vocals an amusing diversion. [+]

Dave Douglas

Dave Douglas: *The Tiny Bell Trio* (1993, Songlines) With Brad Schoeppach (guitar) and Jim Black (drums). Douglas has some interesting similarities to Ken Vandermark: he works in many band configurations, often parallel to each other; he works both in and out of many traditions; he keeps a relatively even balance between his compositional efforts and his interest in improvisation; he is a superb player; and least importantly, he is white, which tends to come up indirectly because his bands tend to have a lot of white guys in them. Both were born in 1964, and both for most purposes cut their first albums in 1993. Their discographies are comparable in length and depth, with Douglas perhaps having more sideman work, and more traditional sideman work -- Vandermark's bit parts are more likely to be buried in underground rock albums. There are differences, of course. Douglas is, relatively speaking, a big name in the mainstream jazz world -- he regularly tops polls in *Downbeat* and *Jazz Times*, whereas Vandermark hardly gets a notice there. Douglas records for bigger, better distributed labels, now including RCA Bluebird. Douglas also has deeper roots in euroclassical music, which I don't particularly consider a plus, but it seems to make his work more accessible, at least to anti-

punkrockers (which is no doubt a large slice of the jazz market these days). I've planned on doing a CG-type rundown of Douglas' works -- the idea was to do a background check following a review of his latest album, but that's nearly a year old by now, and was something of a mishmash anyway -- so I've been accumulating slices of Douglas' oeuvre whenever the opportunity presents itself. The Tiny Bell Trio is one of Douglas' early configurations, and has several albums -- a live record that I've never liked, and *Constellations*, an out-of-print Hat Art album that I think is just super. This is their first, and it's a fine start. Schoeppach's guitar has a distinctly European feel to it -- partly euroclassical, but just as rooted in eurofolk, and these songs (the covers that comprise half the album, and the originals built to fit) have folkish roots. Douglas is superb against such minimal backing -- in general, where Douglas' albums run into trouble is when he lets the band get too big and soupy, for his own playing is rarely anything other than precise and thoughtful. A Kurt Weill tune is par for this course. The closer is a traditional Hungarian piece, "Czardas," which has a circus flair to it. Smart work. [+]

Dave Douglas: *Five* (1995, Soul Note -96) A quintet, natch, but heavy on the strings: Mark Feldman (violin), Erik Friedlander (cello), Drew Gress (bass), Michael Sarin (drums). I've never noticed this before, but most of his originals (there are also covers of Monk and Roland Kirk) are subtitled "for X" -- dedications like Vandermark does -- where X includes Steve Lacy, Wayne Shorter, Mark Dresser, Woody Shaw, John Cage, and John Zorn. I also notice an unusual name among the "special thanks" list: Noam Chomsky. Douglas has used this lineup several times, and I usually find it to be tough going. This may be the best of the series, in part because the strings come off as more modern, in the sense that cubism was more modern. Abstract, that is. I'm sure there's a wealth of detail here if you can stick to it. [+]

Dave Douglas: *Convergence* (1998, Soul Note) With Mark Feldman (violin), Erik Friedlander (cello), Drew Gress (bass), and Michael Sarin (drums) -- same lineup as *Five*. Like so many of Douglas's collaborations with Feldman (the exceptions being the Masada albums, where klezmer is favored and John Zorn keeps discipline) this quickly wanders into semipseudoclassical territory. This matters little on the short, sharp opener, but before long Feldman gets solo space, which stretches my patience. The bigger neoclassical problem is the interference with the pulse, but this is somewhat ameliorated by interesting drumwork from Sarin. Douglas also plays superbly. This is another puzzler in the Douglas catalogue -- rich, complex, inventive, brilliant in spots, annoying in others, something you can spend a lot of time trying to sort out and still come up inconclusive. [+]

Dave Douglas/Tiny Bell Trio: *Songs for Wandering Souls* (1998, Winter & Winter) Only toward the end does the guitarist get in gear, which is what makes this configuration run. But working with just guitar and bass gives Douglas a lot of room for exploring, and he's not a great trumpet player for nothing. [+]

Dave Douglas: *Leap of Faith* (1998, Arabesque -99) A quartet, with Chris Potter (tenor sax), James Genus (bass) and Ben Perowsky (drums). The first cut, promisingly called "Caterwaul," doesn't cohere at all, but the second, the title cut, starts to plot out some agreeable avant-garde terrain. The *Penguin Guide* called this "stunningly good modern jazz," but I'm having trouble getting past the "stunned" -- this seems to wander a lot, and it's hard to focus on. Will take some work. The second horn (Potter) is one thing that causes some clutter here -- it breaks down the unifying voice that his trumpet has even with his complicated string groups. On the other hand, this one never gets mired in the strings. There is, once again, a lot to chew on here. [5]

Dave Douglas: *Soul on Soul* (1999, RCA) For his major label debut, Douglas threw out all the stops: picked up a pair of reed players, a trombone, a first rate rhythm section with Uri Caine on piano, and ransacked the Mary Lou Williams catalog for some tunes. It's a bit busy, but full of excitement and joy, an impressive outing. [9]

Dr. John

Dr. John: *City Lights* (1978, Verve -08) Done as a fluke rock star, not yet established as a local folk legend, Mac Rebennack tries his hand as a singer-songwriter on a mostly-jazz label, and mostly succeeds, thanks in part to a helping hand from Doc Pomus. [7]

Mark Dresser

Mark Dresser: *Force Green* (1994, Soul Note) This is a moody thing, its darkly European artsong flavor typified by the piece called "Bosnia," which develops a compelling level of grief. The oddest thing here is vocalist Theo Bleckmann, who scats like a spare horn -- disorienting at first, annoying in the long run. The first horn is Dave Douglas, best heard on "For Miles" -- Douglas too has a weakness for artsong, which perhaps is part of the reason he fails to freshen up the joint. Penguin Guide has this as a 4-star, which no doubt means that there is more here than I've managed to latch onto. But I dislike the vocal schtick here so much that I doubt that I'll get to it. [4]

Kenny Drew

Kenny Drew Trio (1956, Riverside -05) Bright, sharply etched bebop piano trio with Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones, buoyed with standards that always stand out, notably "Caravan," "Taking a Chance on Love," "It's Only a Paper Moon." [8]

Kenny Drew Jr.

Kenny Drew Jr. Trio: *Secrets* (1995, TCB) With Lynn Seaton (bass) and Marvin Smith (drums). Drew's father I've found to be underrated -- a fine but unflashy bebop pianist who fit in nicely and shored up whatever group he found himself in. Jr.'s a lot flashier, a lot more cosmopolitan, a lot more classically schooled. Still, this is a top-drawer piano-bass-drums trio, and everything he touches here is fresh and beautifully executed; it swings, it rocks, it's delightful. [9]

Kenny Drew Jr. Sextet: *Crystal River* (1995, TCB -98) First rate group: Michael Philip Mossman (trumpet, flugelhorn), Ravi Coltrane (tenor/soprano sax), Steve Nelson (vibes), Lynn Seaton (bass), Tony Reedus (drums). Panned by the Penguin Guide ("less than the sum of its parts . . . Mossman and Coltrane Jr are slightly anonymous as soloists . . . of all Drew's albums, this is the least kindly recorded . . . disappointing"), their only comment that I can hear is "the pianist carries the day." I suppose the horns could be more distinct -- some of Mal Waldron's sextets are that completely impressive. [+]

Gerd Dudek

Gerd Dudek/Buschi Niebergall/Edward Vesala: *Open* (1977, Atavistic -04) Dudek pursues Coltrane's ghost on two saxes, flute and shenai -- an Indian oboe, like blowing into a buzzsaw; bass and

drums add dimensions, a concentrated interplay which free jazz aspires to but rarely achieves. [9]

George Duke

George Duke: *Faces in Reflection* (1974, Verve -08) Keyb player, major credits with Cannonball Adderley and Frank Zappa, not that he bears much likeness to either; basically a synth-playing funkateer, his fusion pleasantly enjoyable, any temptation to slow it down or dub in a vocal fatal. [5]

George Duke: *Feel* (1974, Verve -08) Same as above, only more tempted, more conflicted, more confused. [4]

George Duke: *I Love the Blues, She Heard My Cry* (1975, Verve -08) Good thing is that he's trying more things -- blues riffs, grunge rock, idiosyncratic rhythms; also helps that he's singing better, but no matter how interesting his experiments, he keeps falling back into his faux-funk rut. [5]

Johnny Dyani

Johnny Dyani/Mal Waldron Duo: *Some Jive Ass Boer: Live at Jazz Unité* (1981, Jazz Unité -01) Dyani's pieces dredge up his South African heritage; Waldron's sound like Waldron, which while less exotic are every bit as distinctive. The collaboration "Strange Intrusions" suits them both well: Waldron builds the piece with rhythmic figures, while Dyani walks his bass. [+]

Jimmy Earl

Jimmy Earl (1995, Severn -12) Electric bassist, has done a lot of fusion session work since 1990, dropped two albums under his own name in the late 1990s; this one is a set of sketches for a rather bare bones jazztronica -- syn-sounding drums, more synths, occasional guitar, rarer horns. [6]

Jimmy Earl: *Stratosphere* (1998, Severn -12) Presumably named for the thin oxygen and general chill, more hospitalable to the computers that seem to have taken over -- at some point subtlety risks turning into noodling. [5]

Billy Eckstine

Billy Eckstine: *Jukebox Hits 1943-1953* (1943-53, Acrobat -05) One of the legendary crooners of the postwar era; suave, debonair, with a deep, rich baritone that seems stuffy now but was exceptional at the time; this cross-section starts his crack big band that folded in 1947 and ends with a small combo backing a surprising spat of scat, but in between there is little but strings gradually encasing his marvelous voice in concrete. [5]

Billy Eckstine: *Basie and Eckstine, Inc.* (1959, Roulette -94) Basie is less than atomic here, maintaining a comfortable simmer for the classic crooner, a bluesman in a pinch but not a shouter like Jimmy Rushing or even Joe Williams; not much swing, but the brass remains short and sharp, as finely burnished as the baritone. [6]

Marty Ehrlich

Marty Ehrlich/Peter Erskine/Michael Formanek: *Relativity* (1998, Enja) Starts slow, never quite comes together, but often enough it shows what these three very talented guys can do. [+]

Marty Ehrlich/Ben Goldberg: *Light at the Crossroads* (1996, Songlines) Two clarinets, bass and drums, an intimate set of mild-mannered avant-jazz. Takes a while to negotiate, but nice. [+]

Kurt Elling

Kurt Elling: *Live in Chicago* (1999, Blue Note -00) Morton & Cook claim he's the finest jazz singer of his generation, and they're not alone. But he's not the sort of singer that appeals to me: a hipster, a slinger, a jiveass wise guy. Still, this isn't without charms. Kahil El'Zabar shows up for a set of disjointed world rhythms. Von Freeman, Eddie Johnson, and Ed Peterson blow some credible sax. His slow, steamy strut through "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" impresses me, and a couple of other pieces aren't bad. But then Jon Hendricks also guests. [5]

Duke Ellington

Pianist, composer, bandleader par excellence since he moved his Washingtonians to Harlem in 1927. In the early 1960s he branched out, appearing in small groups and ad hoc combos, including such peers as Louis Armstrong and Count Basie.

Duke Ellington: *Volume 1: Mrs Clinkscales to the Cotton Club* (1924-29, JSP -4CD -05) RCA, which owns most of the masters to America's Greatest Composer's early work, hasn't managed to keep even a good selection in print, so thank God for England's recyclers of old 78s. The first disc starts in November 1924 (not 1926, as the cover says), and the early going is purely historic, but that all changes with "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo" -- the first of several versions coming 16 songs in. The rest is history. [9]

The Great Ellington Units (1940-41, RCA -88) I remember Tom Piazza raving about these Ellington spinoffs, but they went out-of-print almost instantly, and it took me years to track down a copy. The eight Johnny Hodges cuts are supreme classics. Eight cuts from Rex Stewart, and six from Barney Bigard, aren't far behind. [10]

Duke Ellington: *Never No Lament: The Blanton-Webster Band* (1940-42, Bluebird -3CD -03) Jimmy Blanton was a brilliant bassist who joined Ellington's Famous Orchestra in 1940 and fell ill in December 1941, dying a few months later, only 23 years old. Ben Webster's stay with Ellington was longer, from 1935 to 1944. Both were important figures, but the notion that they were the difference that made this Ellington orchestra greater than any other is a myth. One could just as well point to the appearance of Ray Nance, who joined the orchestra just in time for the landmark *The Duke at Fargo 1940* (Storyville), or Billy Strayhorn in 1939, or for that matter Johnny Hodges in 1927. The fact is that Ellington produced incomparable music from "Black and Tan Fantasie" in 1927 through *Latin American Suite* in 1970. But what is special about these recordings is that they represent the heights of Ellington's artistry in the format dictated by 78-rpm singles: 3-minute songs transformed into exquisite little suites. For a lovely sample of Blanton's work, check out his duet on "Sophisticated Lady"; for Webster, tune in to "Cottontail." But for Ellington, wallow in the whole 3-CD set. My only complaint is

the packaging: three cheap cardboard slipcases in a box that's unlikely to last until RCA reissues it again. If ever there were music that deserves a jewel box, this is it. [10]

Duke Ellington: *Masterpieces by Ellington* (1950-51, Columbia/Legacy -04) Welcome to the LP era, which let America's greatest composer stretch out his classic songs, transforming them into resplendent, lushly arranged suites. [9]

Duke Ellington: *Ellington Uptown* (1947-52, Columbia/Legacy -04) In crisis, with Johnny Hodges gone, a daring LP with features for newcomers Louis Bellson and Betty Roché, and "A Tone Parallel to Harlem (Harlem Suite)" -- one of his most ambitious works; augmented with earlier suites, a tour de force. [10]

Duke Ellington: *The 1952 Seattle Concert* (1952, Bluebird -95) The Willie Smith (i.e., not Johnny Hodges) era band, trying to put on a brave face. Ellington introduces features for his orchestra stars, singling out Smith and Britt Woodman and Clark Terry and calling out other names. The first cut is "Skin Deep" -- drummer Louis Bellson's signature piece, which also led off the *Uptown* album. Then come a series of older standards -- "Sultry Serenade," "Sophisticated Lady," "Perdido," "Caravan" -- and a 15:17 "Harlem Suite." A medley helps clean up the must-play list ("Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "In a Sentimental Mood," "Mood Indigo," "I'm Beginning to See the Light," "Prelude to a Kiss," "It Don't Mean a Thing, if It Ain't Got That Swing," "Solitude," "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart"), and it closes with "Jam With Sam." Evidently this was released as an LP in the early '50s ("the first legitimate issue of a live performance by the Ellington band"). Smith's feature is beautiful, but the other spotlights are less than spectacular, and the callouts on "Jam With Sam" are clichéd. It seems that nothing by Ellington is without merit, but this one's merits are minor, and everything here has been done better elsewhere. [5]

The Complete Capitol Recordings of Duke Ellington (1953-55, Mosaic -5CD) These were the latter half of the years when Ellington was deprived of Johnny Hodges' services. The orchestra still had notable talents (Clark Terry, Cat Anderson, Willie Cook, and Ray Nance on trumpet; Quentin Jackson, Britt Woodman, and Juan Tizol on trombone; Russell Procope, Rick Henderson, Paul Gonsalves, Jimmy Hamilton, and Harry Carney on reeds; Ellington on piano; Wendell Marshall on bass; Butch Ballard or Dave Black on drums), and the initial take of "Satin Doll" is fine. Then comes a Jimmy Grissom vocal, and Grissom returns periodically -- a full-bodied, overly starched baritone, yet another subpar Ellington vocalist. When "Basin Street Blues" came on I was taken aback by the sudden appearance of some dynamics in the vocal -- sure enough, Ray Nance sang that one. (Although Grissom does get in a good take on "I'm Just a Luck So and So.") Straddling the first and second CDs is a set of Ellington piano trio -- most of which is separately available as *Piano Reflections* -- long treasured as one of the few isolated examples of Ellington's piano work. Second disc closes with an upbeat Dec. 1953 session which includes a real "Rockin' in Rhythm," with the trombones really crankin' and Cat Anderson (who else?) bouncing off the ceiling -- and Anderson is even more stratospheric in the second take of "Flying Home" on the third disc. The fifth disc generates the most interest: the big band seems friskier, working their way through trickier movements. On the last two cuts even Grissom's singing starts to impress. This period in Ellington's discography is frequently disparaged, but like the mid-'30s it's all relative. *Ellington Uptown* came out in 1952; *Such Sweet Thunder* and *Ellington at Newport* in 1956. Nothing here compares to those points, and the size, bulk, and expense of this set are daunting. [+]

Duke Ellington/Mahalia Jackson: *Black, Brown and Beige* (1958, Columbia) Tough sledding: the 23rd Psalm has never sounded like music to me, and Ellington's suite is similarly slowed down by Jackson's ponderous vocals. [4]

Duke Ellington: *Festival Session* (1959, Columbia/Legacy -04) A studio approximation of one of those rough and ready live performances that put Ellington back on top, replete with a Paul Gonsalves solo to write home about. [9]

Duke Ellington: *Blues in Orbit* (1958-59, Columbia/Legacy -04) A whole album of blues forms, some old but mostly new, with a nod to the age of Sputnik, but Ellington's orchestra never needed an ICBM to reach escape velocity -- "C Jam Blues" was occasion enough. [10]

Duke Ellington: *Piano in the Foreground* (1957-61, Columbia/Legacy -04) He wasn't a great pianist, but he was a smart one, with a marvelous touch; these simple trio pieces focus on his piano and draw him out a bit. [+]

Duke Ellington: *Piano in the Background* (1960, Columbia/Legacy -04) On the other hand, maybe he was right that his real instrument was the orchestra, which blasts these old warhorses past new arrangements meant to spotlight his piano. [+]

The Essential Duke Ellington (1927-60, Columbia/Legacy -2CD -05) The word "essential" has no definition that allows one to reduce Ellington to just two discs. RCA made an admirable attempt in 1994 with a small box called *Beyond Category* -- limited to their own catalog, but that included crucial material from the late '20s, the '40s, and '60s. Columbia owns most, but nowhere near all, of the rest, including Ellington's grossly neglected '30s and a mixed bag from the '50s. The Sony-BMG merger promised to bring these catalogs together, but this first post-merger release is overwhelmingly Columbia-based, with just five RCA cuts and two licensed from other sources. Columbia's been down this road before, and never with very satisfactory results -- partly because the expansive and idiosyncratic '50s cuts never sat well with the tight singles of the '30s, partly because the canonical versions of Ellington's most famous songs were cut for RCA. There are some interesting tradeoffs here: I'm happy to hear the 1937 versions of "Dimuendo in Blue" and "Crescendo in Blue" instead of the famous Newport romp; also the punched up 1953 "Satin Doll" instead of more familiar takes; and I'm delighted that Newport 1956 is represented by "Jeep's Blues." On the other hand, in the imposed scarcity of a mere 2-CD set, every choice is a tradeoff against many other possibilities -- in Ellington's case there are scores of pieces that could have cracked this lineup. [9]

Duke Ellington and Count Basie: *First Time! The Count Meets the Duke* (1961, Columbia/Legacy -09) Two full bore big bands, Basie's in its early post-atomic phase, Ellington's during a short period when he made a habit of collaborating with everyone from Armstrong to Coltrane. Four songs from each songbook, more show-and-tell than cutting, with everyone sharp, alive, swinging. [8]

Duke Ellington Meets Coleman Hawkins (1962, Impulse -95) The tenor sax great was an undemanding sort, delighted to play Ellington songs in a superb combo of Ellingtonians, including Ray Nance, Lawrence Brown, Harry Carney, and Johnny Hodges (a frequent acquaintance over several decades). "Limbo Rock" is so ecstatic someone (Sam Woodyard?) can't help but sing along. After that, they settle in for sublime. [10]

Duke Ellington and John Coltrane (1962, Impulse) A little more unsettled: half the tracks find Ellington replacing Tyner in Coltrane's quartet, the other half add Coltrane to an Ellington piano trio

with Aaron Bell on bass and Sam Woodyard on drums. Coltrane even got one of his songs on the program ("Big Nick"), while Ellington graciously offered up his theme song as "Take the Coltrane." Coltrane eventually settles into the groove, but not without putting up a fight, which is half the fun. [9]

Duke Ellington: *Duke Ellington's Far East Suite* (1966, Bluebird -03) Despite the title "Ad Lib on Nippon," the Ellington tour that inspired these loosely linked pieces started in Amman and strayed no further east than Calcutta. Names like "Mount Harissa" and "Isfahan" suggest that it's more like a Near East Suite, but that's nitpicking. Ellington's "jungle music" of the late '20s was based on only the faintest idea of primordial Africa; this at least picks up some of the sounds and smells of an Asia far east of Harlem, and the inspiration helps to lift this above the usual run of Ellington masterpieces. But this is also the final flowering of Ellington's magnificent orchestra, which from the high trumpet on "Tourist Point of View" to the trilling clarinet on "Ad Lib on Nippon" never sounded better. A year later Billy Strayhorn died; soon Johnny Hodges, and Ellington himself, passed on. The only problem with the latest reissue is that by stuffing it full of extra takes it loses track of the perfect flow of the original album. On the other hand, you won't want to miss a single note. [10]

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra: *The Jaywalker* (1966-67, Storyville -04) Previously unreleased recordings from Ellington's "stockpile" -- the orchestra is magnificent, as you'd expect, but the program isn't as distinctive as one might hope. How much Ellington does one need? Quite a bit, but the line falls well short of this. How much can one truly enjoy? Lots more. [+]

Highlights From the Duke Ellington Centennial Edition (1927-1973) (1927-73, RCA -3CD) This picks at the huge 24CD box in ways that are none too useful: the first CD jumps from RCA's criminally out-of-print early Ellington to his post-1939 return, ending with several classic early '40s tracks rather than a full helping of the early work; the second CD is a smashing tour of Ellington's '40s period, which has been kept in print both in complete and many filleted (or butchered) compilations; the third CD mixes pieces from Ellington's ponderous "Sacred Music" concerts and other trivia with extraordinary work from the '60s. [+]

Kahil El'Zabar

Ethnic Heritage Ensemble: *The Continuum* (1997, Delmark) Kahil El'Zabar's group plays Africanized jazz standards reworked to establish the continuities between African and Afro-American musics -- most notably the Monk piece and El'Zabar's self-evident "Ornette". [+]

Kahil El'Zabar/Billy Bang: *Spirits Entering* (1998, Delmark -01) A duo with the Chicago omniperussionist, whose everyday-from-everywhere beats form a fascinating backdrop. Bang has played with El'Zabar frequently since 1994's *Big Cliff*, but has rarely enjoyed so much space, and responds with touching eloquence. [9]

Booker Ervin

Booker Ervin: *The Freedom Book* (1963, Prestige -07) Short-lived Texas tenor, seems like most of his titles were plays on "Book" -- this followed *The Song Book* and *The Blues Book*; this doesn't qualify as free jazz, but it does open up and range beyond hard bop, with Jaki Byard's piano challenging the sax. [9]

Booker Ervin: *Tex Book Tenor* (1968, Blue Note -05) I think this was Ervin's last album before he

died at 39 of kidney failure; in any case, it sums him up nicely, the big Texas tone in the middle of a barnburning hard bop quintet, joined by two youngsters -- under 25 at the time -- who demand and deserve attention: Woody Shaw and Kenny Barron. [8]

Ellery Eskelin

Ellery Eskelin/Andrea Parkins/Jim Black: *One Great Day* (1996, Hatology -97) I've made extended discography lists of some musicians whose import extends far beyond their own records -- like Paul Motian, Dave Holland, and William Parker. I haven't gotten around to Jim Black yet, but I wouldn't be surprised to find him on the same track, if not quite yet in the same league. Parkins is the odd one out here: she's credited with accordion and sampler. Seems to me there's a small bit of piano here, so maybe that was sampled? The accordion functions like an organ -- Eskelin's mother played organ, so that may have something to do with his thinking here -- similar in tone, a bit slower dynamics, harmonizes better with the sax, while covering the hole left by no bassist. None of which matters all that much: above all else, this is a great tenor sax album, with a singular voice working difficult material. [9]

Ellery Eskelin: *Five Other Pieces (+2)* (1998, Hatology) Same trio with Andrea Parkins and Jim Black. The five pieces by others come from John McLaughlin, Lennie Tristano, John Coltrane, Charlie Haden, and George Gershwin. The "+2" are Eskelin originals. The most immediate effect of working with "other folks' music" -- a Roland Kirk phrase Eskelin quotes in his remarkably useful liner notes -- is to bring Parkins' accordion much to the fore. As usual, covers mean stronger themes -- why else bother with them? -- and in the case of Coltrane's "India" set up an unusual degree of repetition, which underscores the group's sound. The "(+2)" are two Eskelin originals. [8]

Ellery Eskelin: *Ramifications* (1999, Hatology -00) Eskelin expands his trio to quintet here, making unorthodox choices. Is Joe Daley's tuba the brass alongside Eskelin's tenor sax, or is it the missing bass? Or is Erik Friedlander's cello the missing bass, or the second lead instrument. Actually, there is no second lead -- the group mostly provides a somber backdrop for Eskelin's pained, powerful sax maneuvers. This is especially true on the title cut, which is dirgelike except for the sax's mighty struggles. [8]

Bill Evans

Bill Evans: *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* (1958, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -07) Second album, with plugs on cover from Miles Davis, George Shearing, Ahmad Jamal, and Cannonball Adderley, names that carried even more weight then than they do now; I dig the upbeat stuff and respect but never quite warmed to the quiet meandering, extended on the bonus cut. [8]

Bill Evans: *Portrait in Jazz* (1959, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) A moment in transition after his triumph with Miles Davis on *Kind of Blue*, as Evans moves away from his group work and into his first classic piano trio, with magic drummer Paul Motian and the newfound, short-lived bassist Scott LaFaro; they offset the pianist's studied introversion. [9]

Bill Evans Trio: *Explorations* (1961, Riverside/OJC -11) Piano trio with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian, the studio record before the trio's justly famous Village Vanguard records; scattered covers, sometimes remarkable, more often (to me, at least) inscrutable. [8]

Bill Evans: *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* (1961, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) Always a subtle pianist, sneaking about here as bassist Scott LaFaro frequently leads and drummer Paul Motian invents his off-centric drumming; LaFaro died in a car crash ten days later, his legendary status secured this weekend, which also yielded *Waltz for Debby*, this record's only rival for the highpoint of Evans' career. [10]

Bill Evans: *Moonbeams* (1962, Riverside/OJC -90) With Chuck Israels (in place of the late, great Scott LaFaro) and Paul Motian, this is one of his many quiet, careful, introspective piano trios. I've never felt like I understood Evans, and this one doesn't help in that regard. I barely have a sense of how to rate his work, or rather how to sort out what little I've heard (about 10 CDs, out of 60 or so). This was recorded at the same time as *How My Heart Sings!* (which I haven't heard), with the ballads concentrated in this one. As such it is very delicate work -- the least ambient noise is distracting, and even the rhythm section is subdued. Which just goes to make it harder than usual, but when you can hear it this sounds strikingly beautiful. [+]

Bill Evans Trio: *At Shelly's Manne Hole* (1963, Riverside -05) The end of Evans' run at Riverside, with Chuck Israels and Larry Bunker balancing out the trio; understated but clever how they inch around standards as well worn as "Our Love Is Here to Stay" and "Round Midnight" without getting predictable. [+]

Bill Evans: *The V.I.P.s Theme* (1963, Verve -08) Movie music, backed by a string orchestra that manages to avoid being soupy or silly (although not by a lot), with the pianist more forthright than usual; given diminished expectations, not so bad. [5]

Bill Evans: *At the Montreux Jazz Festival* (1968, Verve -98) With Eddie Gomez and Jack DeJohnette. Evans is not a musician that I feel I have much of a handle on, although I'm as amazed by some of his work (e.g., *Sunday at the Village Vanguard*) as anyone, and I've been impressed by a couple of late sets as well. This one is a bit harder to judge: it sounds thoughtful, but also spry and limber, and the rhythm section is a big help. Evans' Verve recordings are generally not as well regarded as his Riversides, and I haven't paid much attention to them, but I don't see any reason to discourage this one. [9]

Bill Evans: *Live at Art D'Lugoff's Top of the Gate* (1968, Resonance -2CD -12) Previously unreleased, one set on each disc, three songs repeated (out of eight or nine), in what turned out to be a good year for the trio -- Eddie Gomez is fully engaged, Marty Morell stays as far out of the way as Paul Motian did, and the pianist just plays and plays. [9]

Bill Evans: *Momentum* (1972, Limetree -2CD -12) Another previously unreleased live trio set, a concert in Groningen, also with Eddie Gomez and Marty Morell, stretches twelve songs to 92:42; stretches a bit thin in spots, but the piano is expressive, lush even. [7]

Gil Evans

Gil Evans: *The Complete Pacific Jazz Sessions* (1958-59, Blue Note -06) Think of this as Evans' sketchbook for recasting a big slice of the jazz tradition into his deftly layered, intricate modernism; brilliant in spots, not just for the voicings but also for the solos -- Cannonball Adderley is featured on the first half, but Steve Lacy and Budd Johnson are more interesting on the second. [8]

Gil Evans: *Out of the Cool* (1960, Impulse -96): And out of the closet, a prime example of Miles Davis's favorite arranger texturing and layering a large band into a sum where all parts are one. [9]

The Gil Evans Orchestra Plays the Music of Jimi Hendrix (1974-75, Bluebird -02) At his best Evans manages to get his 18-piece orchestra cranked up to the level that Hendrix easily sustained with his trio; the rest is icing and filigree, but the guitarists keep the bottom funky, the horns love the monster riffs, Billy Harper adds something of his own, and Hannibal Peterson's two vocals don't detract from their model. [+]

John Fahey

John Fahey: *The Dance of Death & Other Plantation Favorites* (1964, Takoma -99) The guitarist's first album, original pieces (plus one by Clarence Ashley) rather than the promised historical dip, not that history doesn't dwell everywhere Fahey picks; the CD adds four covers, offering the taste of recognition. [9]

John Fahey: *The Transfiguration of Blind Joe Death* (1965, Takoma -97) The most famous of Fahey's early albums. His ability to reinvent traditional folk melodies is unique, as is the sharp resonance he evokes with his guitar. I still prefer his Reprise albums where he has an orchestra to work with, both fleshing out his sound and spelling him, but this solo work earns its reputation. [9]

John Fahey and His Orchestra: *Of Rivers and Religion* (1972, Collectors' Choice -01): Fahey was an antiquarian but hardly a folk artist. He spent most of his life recording solo guitar albums on his own Takoma label -- that singularity seemed to suit him. He liked the sharp metallic sound of Charley Patton but he was less interested in Patton's intensity. Much of Fahey's work has a laconic dolefulness that he could snap with a single stinging note. He was intriguing enough that bigger labels flirted with him -- Vanguard in the late '60s, Reprise in 1972-73. This is the first of two Reprise albums, both recorded with "his orchestra": a second guitar, banjo, mandolin, some horns which give "Lord Have Mercy" a dixieland feel. But topically this is the lighter, more pleasing alternative to his Blind Joe Death schtick: rivers and religion seems like his thing, and he fits his originals seamlessly with the tradition. [10]

John Fahey and His Orchestra: *After the Ball* (1973, Collectors' Choice -01) The second of two Reprise albums, with more role for the orchestra, who sound more dixieland than before; especially striking for the way his guitar weaves in and stands out in the trad jazz setting. [10]

The Best of John Fahey 1959-1977 (1967-77, Takoma -02) Adds more than 30 minutes to the original LP selected by Fahey himself (note that the 1959 tracks here and elsewhere were re-recorded in 1967); typical of his work, a clinic in how to play guitar and sound like nobody else. [9]

The Best of John Fahey, Vol. 2 (1964-83, Takoma -04) More solo guitar, as riveting as the first volume, maybe more so; only 3 cuts duplicated from Rhino's *Return of the Repressed: The John Fahey Anthology* [1994, 2CD], vs. 8 for the first volume. [9]

Art Farmer

Art Farmer: *Farmer's Market* (1956, Prestige -07) Bright, joyful hard bop from a rhythm section that includes Kenny Drew and Elvin Jones, but Farmer on trumpet and Hank Mobley on tenor sax don't mesh all that well, nor does either threaten to run off with the record. [5]

Art Farmer-Benny Golson Jazztet: *Here and Now* (1962, Verve) I've yet to figure out how to make

fine distinctions in the Jazztet's works: this is nice, graceful, tasteful, pretty much everything you'd expect. [+]

Joe Farrell

Joe Farrell: *Outback* (1970, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) An underrated tenor saxophonist, dead before his 50th birthday, leads a quartet with Chick Corea on electric piano, Buster Williams, and Elvin Jones; the title track opens weakly on flute, so this takes a while to get moving, only catching fire on the final track. [6]

Kali Z. Fasteau

Zusaan Kali Fasteau & Donald Rafael Garrett: *Memoirs of a Dream* (1975-77, Flying Note -2CD) Garrett was a musician who mostly played clarinet and bass, recording with Roland Kirk, Archie Shepp, Eddie Harris, and John Coltrane in the '60s. Fasteau has played a wide range "since early childhood in Paris and New York." They met in 1971, married, and set out to travel the world for the next 14 years. They recorded an album for ESP in 1976 called *We Move Together*, under the name the Sea Ensemble. These two performances date from the same period: the first a little over 30 minutes, the second up in the 60 minute range. The instrumentation is exotic more often than not, and the music tends to be minimalist around the instrumentation. For example, one interesting track is "Dromedary Dance," where Garrett plays two Turkish straight flutes (kaval, zurna), and Fasteau drums. The next cut combines cello, sanza (an mbira-like thumb piano), and Coltrane-ish clarinet. Most of these pieces make use of voice, mostly just for sonic effect. While this smacks of deliberate eclecticism, in effect the collection of exotic timbres and rhythms for their own sake, it is in fact a rather likable, and charming in its intimacy. [+]

Kali Z. Fasteau: *Prophecy* (1990-92, Flying Note -11) World traveler, avant-garde gadfly, widow of a clarinet player connected to Coltrane's late work, plays a dozen odd instruments -- sheng, ney, and mizmar are conspicuous here -- vigorously if not always expertly, and sings more than a little -- exuberantly if not all that listenably, with a cast of eight, most notably bassist William Parker. [5]

Kali Z. Fasteau/William Parker/Cindy Blackman: *An Alternative Universe* (1991-92, Flying Note -11) From the same period as *Prophecy*, but Fasteau limits herself to rotating pieces on three instruments (cello, soprano sax, electric piano, with no vocals); the cello emerges stealthily from Parker's bass, the soprano squawks wild and free, and the piano reduced to toy percussion, something the others can add twists to. [7]

Zusaan Kali Fasteau: *Sensual Hearing* (1995, Flying Note -97) The fourth piece here, "Ebb and Flow," is basically a duet for bass (William Parker) and violin (Somalia Richards), lovely. One called "Lament to Wake the World" features Fasteau singing, or perhaps vocalizing is more accurate -- a deep-throated warble followed by some high notes. While most of these influences are Asian, "Kumba Mela" sounds African, with drums and chants, djembe and flutes, in barely contained chaos, and the audience participation only adds to the effect. [+]

Kali Fasteau: *Vivid* (1998-99, Flying Note -01) A promising group, with Parker (bass), Hamid Drake (drums), Ron McBee (djembe & African percussion), Sabir Mateen (alto/tenor sax), Joe McPhee (soprano sax, pocket trumpet), and Fasteau (soprano sax, voice, and the usual kitchen sink). This is

emerging as the most straightforward blowing date of the Fasteau records I have, although with Fasteau and McPhee both favoring the soprano sax, and switching off to even higher pitched instruments, the front line tends to sound high, thin, and a bit lonesome. Parker and Drake, of course, are superb. [5]

Pierre Favre

Pierre Favre Ensemble: *Singing Drums* (1984, ECM) Four drummers -- percussionists anyway: Nana Vasconcelos sticks with berimbau, tympani, conga, water pot, shakers, bells and voice, while Favre, Paul Motian and Fredy Studer occasionally play drums in addition to various percussion instruments. To get the singing sound they keep a soft-toned gong-type thing going. Still, they have trouble giving it any shape. It mostly just flitters away in the background. [5]

Maynard Ferguson

Maynard Ferguson: *Octet* (1955, Verve -08): Stan Kenton's flashy young trumpeter leads a big enough band -- Georgie Auld, Herb Geller, and Bob Gordon on saxophones; Conte Candoli also on trumpet; Shelly Manne behind the drums -- through seven Bill Holman pieces (plus one Johnny Mercer) built for this kind of speed and precision. [9]

Mongezi Feza

Mongezi Feza: *Free Jam* (1972, Ayler -2CD -04) At last the South African trumpeter, who went into exile with Chris McGregor and distinguished Robert Wyatt's marvelous *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* before his sad, premature death, gets something in the catalog under his own name; backed by Okay Temiz and Bernt Rosengren's quartet this is very free, loose, and noisy, typical of the anarchic avant-garde that flowered in Europe in the early '70s, which means that it depends on its own energy and good cheer to succeed -- which it delivers. [+]

Scott Fields

Scott Fields: *5 Frozen Eggs* (1996, Clean Feed -12) Chicago-based avant guitarist, specializes in cranky solo affairs but yields here to pianist Marilyn Crispell's piano, at her iciest, creating fractured landscapes that Fields, bassist Hans Sturm, and drummer Hamid Drake trek through. [8]

Clare Fischer

Clare Fischer Orchestra: *Extension* (1963, International Phonograph -12) Early on, an arranger influenced by Gil Evans, as is the case here, one of the Pacific Jazz albums that helped sustain the modernist big band genre (Gerald Wilson was the best known example; also Bob Florence); later on Fischer wandered all over the map, dabbling in bossa nova, salsa picante, pop jazz, classical music, even arranging funk albums for Prince, leaving him with a decidedly mixed reputation, but here his eclecticism at least served a formal need -- too bad his favorite horns were flutes. [5]

Ella Fitzgerald

Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong: *Ella and Louis Again* (1957, Verve 2CD -03) When Norman Granz signed Ella Fitzgerald in 1956, he took a first-rate jazz singer known for her sass and scat and put her on a strict diet of Great American Songwriters. The three duet albums she recorded with Louis Armstrong followed suit: the interesting thing about them isn't that Fitzgerald would sing them superbly, but that Armstrong's own vocals turned out to be so perfectly crafted. No one doubted by then that Armstrong was a truly great singer, but his usual fare was coarser fare, which fit his gruff and gravelly voice and penchant for comedy. When Armstrong cut two tribute albums in 1954-55, the songwriters he chose were W.C. Handy and Fats Waller, not the fancy Tin Pan Alley tunesmiths Granz fed to Ella. But here he's singing "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" and "They All Laughed" and "A Fine Romance" and "Stompin' at the Savoy" and it's just marvelous how deftly he maneuvers his voice around those songs' sinuous twists. People may quibble: there isn't much chemistry here -- compare this to Armstrong's trysts with Velma Middleton on *The California Concerts* (1951-55, Decca 4CD) -- and there could be more trumpet like the clarion intro to "Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You?" But even if this is mere professionalism, it's still amazing. The previous CD release was squeezed onto one CD by omitting seven songs where only one or the other sung; this version restores the original 2-LP order. That may not be an improvement, but Ella's features are typically superb ("Comes Love"), and Armstrong's are exceptional ("Makin' Whoopee," "Let's Do It," a little trumpet on "Willow Weep for Me"). [10]

Ella Fitzgerald/Louis Armstrong: *Porgy and Bess* (1957, Verve -08) After two utterly delightful standards albums together -- *Ella and Louis* and *Ella and Louis Again* -- their third (and last) goes high concept, with Russ Garcia laying the orchestration so thick his stars can't get a word in for 12 minutes; the overkill is remarkable but tedious; the singers (and trumpet solos) marvelous; the songs often not up to snuff. [5]

The Best of Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Armstrong (1956-57, Verve -97) How many ways can you slice and dice their three albums together? The first two are essential, and *Porgy & Bess* has its moments, so it's almost impossible to construct an inferior sampler, but a redundant one is a piece of cake. [9]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Live at Mister Kelly's* (1958, Verve 2CD -07) So much live Ella tends to run together, but two full discs picked from a three-week club run just overwhelms you with how much talent and verve she brought to such a wide range of material; the breakneck scat, the off-the-cuff lyric rewrites, you figure her metier is speed, then she drops a pure ballad like "Stardust" on you and just nails it. [9]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Ella in Hollywood* (1961, Verve -09) So much live Ella tends to run together, but this slice catches her at some sort of a peak, warm, funny, downright athletic when she scats, with Lou Levy and Herb Ellis bright spots on the band. [9]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Twelve Nights in Hollywood* (1961-62, Hip-O Select/Verve 4CD -09) The recently reissued single *Ella in Hollywood* sums this up nicely, but with Norman Granz recording all of an eleven night stand at Sunset Strip's Crescendo Club, the first three discs here are still cherry picking, with no redundancies except when Ella herself would sing one twice in a row, just because she was into it. She was into nearly everything here: on the last lap of her tour through the songbooks, she had a vast repertoire, and could make more up any time the words stumped her or she just wanted to play with you -- after all, everybody loves "Perdido" even though nobody knows the words. The fourth disc returns a year later, with no guitar and different piano and drums -- changes that make no real

difference. The packaging here looks fancy but is awkward, with its slip-cover misidentifying guitarist Herb Ellis, and inflexible sleeves making it hard to get discs in and out. [9]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Sings the Jerome Kern Songbook* (1963, Verve -05) Great singer, pretty good songs, a perfectly adequate orchestra led by the dependable Nelson Riddle; this came late in the songbooks series and is something of a mop-up operation. [+]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Love Songs: Best of the Verve Song Books* (1956-63, Verve -96) The third best-of from the classic series, a little bit of everything, all of it superb. I'm especially struck by "Prelude to a Kiss" -- the band (Ellington's, natch) is sublime, and Duke never hired a singer who could hold a candle to her (although Adelaide Hall may have done more interesting things with candles). The next one, "All Too Soon," features gorgeous saxophone -- Paul Gonsalves. And those are just the slow ones -- it may be that anyone can carry the fast ones, but who else can swing them like Ella? [10]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Ken Burns Jazz* (1938-63, Verve -00) She's got a huge discography, but this hits a remarkable number of the obvious high points: her first hit ("A Tisket, a Tasket"), Chick Webb's Orchestra with and without Webb, her famous "Flying Home" scat, her famous Gershwin duo with Ellis Larkins, her famous "Smooth Sailing" scat, her classic "Lullaby of Birdland," classic pieces from the Gershwin and Ellington songbooks, a duet with Armstrong ("Let's Call the Whole Thing Off"), her notorious "Mack the Knife," big bands from Billy May to Count Basie, small groups with Lou Levy, her Opera House gig with Roy Eldridge and what amounts to the Saxophone Hall of Fame. Anyone who doesn't already know at least a third of this is just plain ignorant. Only reason I hadn't gotten around to this before is that I'd already heard everything here but the last two cuts. Not sure if this is actually better than *The Best of Ella Fitzgerald: First Lady of Song* -- it's certainly more comprehensive and varied, but her previous all-time best sampler sticks to her immensely rich and vibrant 1956-63 prime and throws you a couple of curves lest you get too comfortable. But this one does what it's supposed to do, which is to educate by astonishing. [10]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Ella at Juan-Les-Pins* (1964, Verve 2CD -02) This chronicles two days at a jazz festival in France, with Ella and trumpet great Roy Eldridge backed by Tommy Flanagan's trio. Both days run through much the same songlist, so you get two takes of "Hello Dolly," "Just A-Sittin' and A-Rockin'," "People," "Can't Buy Me Love," "Mack the Knife," and so forth, plus extra material at the end brings the "A-Tisket, A Tasket" count up to four. "People" is way too reverent, and not even Ella can swing the Beatles, although she puts a lot of effort into it. But the payoff comes with her warhorses, where she rips through the likes of "The Lady Is a Tramp" with scat flying every which way. There's a lot of live Ella on the available now -- *Ella and Duke at the Côte D'Azur* (1966) is my favorite, and Pablo's 4-CD *The Concert Years* never fails to please -- but at its peaks this is as stratospheric as any. [9]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Ella in Hamburg* (1965, Verve -07) Backed by Tommy Flanagan's trio, a quick, topical set of Ella being Ella, ripping through "Body and Soul," "A Hard Day's Night," "The Boy From Ipanema," "Old MacDonald Has a Farm," virtually anything that gets in her way, acing the standards making good fun of the novelties. [7]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Whisper Not* (1966, Verve -02) With Marty Paich and his Orchestra -- a better big band than I would've figured, perhaps because the personnel listing includes Harry Edison, Jimmy Rowles, and either Louis Bellson or Shelly Manne on drums. In any case, the singer is center-stage, and the orchestra is there for her -- adding and filling, occasionally flexing their muscles when it makes

sense to reinforce Ella's brassiness with real brass. [+]

Ella Fitzgerald and Oscar Peterson: *Ella and Oscar* (1975, Pablo/OJC -11) An inevitable pairing as Norman Granz tries to extend his old label magic into his new label; Peterson is personable as always, and Fitzgerald knows her songbook, but this doesn't quite mesh. [6]

Ella Fitzgerald: *Love Letters From Ella* (1973-83, Concord/Starbucks -07) Ten previously unreleased tracks from her late, still great Pablo years, some of which have been recently overdubbed, especially by the London Symphony Orchestra -- their strings would be yucky behind anyone else, but they just slide under her strong vocals; still, the idea that this is new stretches into deceit; presumably this is meant to give coffee-addled youngsters their first taste, but wouldn't they be better off starting with something old but historically secure? [5]

Ella Fitzgerald and Joe Pass: *Easy Living* (1986, Pablo/OJC -11) Guitarist Pass produce a widely acclaimed solo album in 1973 called *Virtuoso*, and he worked that title to death in subsequent years, but he just adds frosting here -- Fitzgerald is the real virtuoso, standing nearly every song up, her timing and phrasing impeccable. [8]

Tommy Flanagan

Tommy Flanagan/Jaki Byard: *The Magic of 2: Live at Keystone Korner* (1982, Resonance -13) Two major pianists, live, start out with duets on standards (first three: Charlie Parker, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington), later on alternating solos. Bright and tinkly, Flanagan seems more at home with the material. [6]

Bob Florence

Bob Florence: *Jewels* (1979-86, Discovery -92) Jazz pianist, cut his first trio album in 1956 but spent most of his time arranging for big bands (Harry James, Louie Bellson, Stan Kenton, Buddy Rich) and finally cut his own big band records with LA session cats in the 1980s, the subject of this sampler. [7]

Brigitte Fontaine

Brigitte Fontaine: *Comme à la Radio* (1969, Saravah) French singer, her voice (here at least) almost as declamatory as Nico's, a minimalist effect playing off the exotica of the band -- otherwise known as the Art Ensemble of Chicago. [8]

Ricky Ford

Ricky Ford: *Tenor Madness Too!* (1992, Muse) I got into Ford through his connection to Abdullah Ibrahim, and followed him fairly closely back in my "pre-jazz" days. Still got some old LPs that I don't remember clearly enough to rate, so one of these days I'll have to go back and sort him out. This is more recent: a quintet with a second saxophone (Antoine Roney, who dat? [uh, Wallace's Branford]), and a piano-bass-drums section of Donald Brown, Peter Washington, and Louis Hayes (no need to look those guys up). No real madness here: the two saxophones often play in synch, which I'm not much fond of, although the solo play is impressive. The pieces are half standards -- "Con Alma," "Soul Eyes," "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)," that sort of thing, and half Ford compositions. Ford's pieces tend

to run free, with Hayes helping out. Brown and Washington are always tasteful. The one cut built out of two-sax traded lines is Ford's "Rollin' and Strollin'," which works as well as any. The ballad "Soul Eyes" is done nicely, and the long sax intro to the Ellington is quite good. [+]

Frank Foster

Frank Foster: *Manhattan Fever* (1968-69, Blue Note -07) The 6- and 7-piece groups here sound larger than that -- Foster's apprenticeship with Count Basie skilled him at sharpening the edges of the arrangements, and he never wastes an instrument, typically riffing against sharp blasts of brass, then parting the waters for a deft solo with a bit of piano; Duke Pearson produced, and must have pushed him hard. [9]

Frank Foster: *Well Water* (1977, Piadrum -07): Count Basie's New Testament saxophonist-arranger leads an unruly 20-piece big band monster, something he calls the Loud Minority Band; mostly overkill, but when they break down to a piano trio on the bonus track they rock and roll, and then dissolve to a drum solo, which is pure Elvin Jones. [5]

Frank Foster/Frank Wess: *Two for the Blues* (1983, Pablo/OJC -93) With Kenny Barron (piano), Rufus Reid (bass), Marvin Smith (drums). Foster and Wess were the mainstays of Count Basie's saxophone section during the '50s and well beyond. This is basically a set of blues moves, and everyone here knows what they're doing. My only complaint is that it's just too easy. [5]

Panama Francis

Panama Francis: *All Stars 1949* (1949, Collectables -90) Fair-to-good jump blues band. Not sure who's playing sax -- Danny Turner and George Kelly are mentioned in the liner notes as "the front line," and some cuts sound like they have two saxes, maybe one tenor and one alto. [Kelly plays tenor; Turner, a Basie alumnus, usually plays alto.] Sound is very uneven here, which takes its toll both at the beginning and end. [5]

Yves François

Yves François: *Blues for Hawk* (1981-82, Delmark -05) Easy-going blues-drenched sessions with Chicago legends Franz Jackson and Eddie Johnson joining the then-young trad jazz trumpeter-leader. [+]

Aretha Franklin

Aretha Franklin: *Aretha: With the Ray Bryant Combo* (1960-61, Columbia -61) Aside from some gospel cut barely in her teens, her first album, still just 18 but in full voice and remarkably poised, standards and originals by arranger J. Leslie McFarland, with various backing, notably including Ray Bryant on piano, Al Sears on tenor sax and/or Quentin Jackson on trombone; Rhapsody has 2011 remasters and a mixed bag of bonus cuts but I haven't find a matching CD release. [9]

Aretha Franklin: *The Electrifying Aretha Franklin* (1962, Columbia) John Hammond and Richard Wess struggle to find arrangements that work, throwing together various mixes of strings, big bands, and small combos, and she struggles mightily to overcome them; one exception is the big band-

propelled "Rough Lover." [7]

Aretha Franklin: *The Tender, the Moving, the Swinging Aretha Franklin* (1962, Columbia) Robert Mersey's strings spoil nearly every arrangement, and even her magnificent voice sometimes serves her ill -- hope I never hear this "God Bless the Child" again; on the other hand, no fault of hers that she comes up short on "Try a Little Tenderness" -- Otis Redding's definitive take was still to come. [4]

Aretha Franklin: *Laughing on the Outside* (1963, Columbia) More strings, more standards, done at a crawl -- "Skylark," "Make Someone Happy," "Solitude," "Until the Real Thing Comes Around," "I Wanna Be Around"; she seems hopelessly trapped, but eventually you tune out the arrangements and take comfort in her suffering. [5]

Aretha Franklin: *Unforgettable: A Tribute to Dinah Washington* (1964, Columbia/Legacy -95) Franklin could out-belt Ethel Merman, anyone really, so it's no surprise that she winds up murdering Dinah; the songbook breaks some ground for Franklin -- "Cold, Cold Heart," "Drinking Again," "Evil Gal Blues" -- but doesn't open her up, while Robert Mersey's strings are as anesthetizing as ever. [4]

Aretha Franklin: *Runnin' Out of Fools* (1964, Columbia) Ex-Mercury A&R director Clyde Otis takes the reins, finally giving up on shoehorning Franklin into the jazz tradition, turning her loose on contemporary pop covers -- "Mockingbird," "Walk On By," "My Girl," and "The Shoop Shoop Song" are amusing novelties, but she finds her calling on "You'll Lose a Good Thing"; question is: did anyone at Columbia notice? [7]

Aretha Franklin: *Yeah!!!* (1965, Columbia) Subtitled *In Person: With Her Quartet*, notably guitarist Kenny Burrell, a live return to the standards repertoire -- "Misty," "Love for Sale," but also "If I Had a Hammer" and "There Is No Greater Love"; great voice, but little nuance -- she powers through everything, and the quartet gets little chance to jazz it up. [6]

Aretha Franklin: *Jazz Moods: 'Round Midnight* (1961-69, Columbia/Legacy -05) The low repute of her Columbia recordings has nothing to do with her voice, as awesome and soulful as it was when she moved to Atlantic and became a star. The problem is everything else -- the songs, the arrangements, the strings. [5]

Bud Freeman

Bud Freeman: *Chicago/Austin High School Jazz in Hi-Fi* (1957, Mosaic -06) Small world, that so many of Chicago's trad jazz greats came out of the same high school, but the lineup here is actually broader, with Jack Teagarden among the ringers. Freeman was an easy swinging tenor saxophonist, emerging in the late '20s as a prototype for the lighter, looser Lester Young sound, and lasting into the '80s. The three sessions collected here didn't have to look too far back to find the camaraderie, the freshness, and the excitement the Austin High Gang grew up with. [9]

The Bud Freeman All-Star Swing Sessions (1935-62, Prestige -03) Freeman is a tenor saxophonist who goes back far enough to have been influenced by the guy who influenced Lester Young; he's always been a unique stylist, so one welcomes this effort to tie together three scattered sessions: even if the core 1960 session with Ellington trumpeter Shorty Baker is rather sedate, the 1962 session is rousing trad jazz, and the early one is pre-trad, what you might call classic -- especially after hearing Bunny Berigan. [+]

Chico Freeman

Chico Freeman: *Morning Prayer* (1976, Why Not -09) Second album by a young saxophonist on the make surrounded by the cream of Chicago's AACM -- Muhal Richard Abrams, Cecil McBee, Steve McCall -- with Douglas Ewart floating in for some flute exotica, a distraction from the more interesting free form funk, the funkiest being "Pepe's Samba." [7]

Von Freeman

Von Freeman: *Live at the Dakota* (1996, Premonition -01) Runs long and slow; while Von sounds grand, the band just sounds tired. [6]

Von Freeman: *75th Birthday Celebration* (1998, Half Note) Von is one of the most distinctive sounding tenors around, and his playing is the best thing about this rather haphazard disc. [5]

Don Friedman

Don Friedman at Maybeck: *Maybeck Recital Hall Series Volume Thirty-Three* (1993, Concord -94) Pianist, b. 1935, joined Dexter Gordon in 1956, cut some well regarded albums in the 1960s, continues today; solo, part of a series that sooner or later flagged damn near every important mainstream pianist in jazz. [6]

Curtis Fuller

Hard bop trombonist from Detroit, wrote and arranged enough to get his name up front from 1957 on, but not much of a showboat.

Curtis Fuller: *Soul Trombone* (1961, Impulse) A sextet with Jimmy Heath's tenor sax for soul and Freddie Hubbard's trumpet for sparkle, with Cedar Walton steadying the hard bop rhythm section. Seems tentative to me, getting little mileage out of its star power -- only Hubbard really shines here. [5]

Curtis Fuller: *Cabin in the Sky* (1962, Impulse) Music from Vernon Duke (né Vladimir Dukelsky)'s 1940 musical, done up fancy with a big orchestra arranged and conducted by Manny Albam. The strings are standard issue shlock, but the brass packs some punch, and Eddie Costa's vibes and Barry Galbraith's guitar are notable. [4]

Joel Futterman

Joel Futterman/William Parker/Jimmy Williams: *Authenticity* (1998, Kali -99) First cut has Futterman on piano, a lot of perambulating, with Williams' guitar contrasting to Parker's bass; second cut has Futterman on a rather thin-sounding soprano sax, working with Parker; both of these snatches have a high difficulty quotient, although neither are particularly loud. [4]

Slim Gaillard

Slim Gaillard: *Laughing in Rhythm* (1937-52, Proper -4CD -03) Anyone who wondered what more there might be to Gaillard beyond Verve's 1994 *Laughing in Rhythm* comp will welcome this, which

sustains his shtick over four relaxed hours without ever wearing out its welcome. Turns out that there is quite a bit more -- even if it is somewhat more of the same. [9]

Serge Gainsbourg

Serge Gainsbourg: *Du Jazz Dans le Ravin* (1958-64, Philips/Mercury -96) Relatively early, relatively jazzy, plus a touch of Weill. As jazz goes this is pretty lightweight stuff, but one might give it more credit as hip Parisian chanson. Might. [5]

Eddie Gale

Eddie Gale's Ghetto Music (1968, Water -03) Gale is a trumpet player. He studied with Kenny Dorham, and played mostly with hard boppers before he surfaced on two farther out 1966 albums: Larry Young's *Of Love and Peace* and Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structures*. He hasn't recorded much since -- some Sun Ra in 1965 and 1978-79, a 1992 album with pianist Larry Willis called *A Minute With Miles*, and a few things that he's selling on his website. This was the first of the two Blue Notes, recorded by Rudy Van Gelder, produced by Francis Wolf, forgotten by EMI until it was recused by Water (a small label devoted to '60s obscurities ranging from Albert Ayler to Pearls Before Swine to the Holy Modal Rounders). He's assembled a group of musicians with Russell Lyle on tenor sax and flute, two bassists, and two drummers -- a group that can swing hard. And he's also put together a choir of 11 singers, most likely church-trained. Joann Gale takes the lead on the first cut ("The Rain"), and Elaine Beiner leads elsewhere, but mostly they sing in unison, an ensemble that rocks the house. [10]

Eddie Gale: *Black Rhythm Happening* (1969, Water -03) The second of the Blue Notes. Same basic group, the core stripped of its extra bass/drums, but with some guests added, most famously Elvin Jones. (There's an alto sax credit for Jamie Lyons. AMG lists Jamie Lyons as a member of the Music Explosion, mostly a bubblegum group, but they had a hit in 1967, "Little Bit O'Soul"; AMG credits Lyons with playing guitar, trombone, maracas. However, a more likely candidate would be Jimmy Lyons, who played alto sax with Gale on Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structures*.) Again with the chorus. First thing here is the title track, which is more of a chant against an awesome funk backdrop. [9]

Hal Galper

Hal Galper: *Portrait* (1989, Concord) A very bright, sharp piano trio. I tend to bunch anything that's good in that format into the B+ niche, but every time I play this one it surprises me. [9]

Vyacheslav Ganelin

The Ganelin Trio: *Poco-A-Poco* (1978, Leo -88) Free jazz group formed in 1968 in the Soviet Union, with Vyacheslav Ganelin on piano, Vladimir Chekasin on reeds, and Vladimir Tarasov on drums. Around 1982 Leo Records, an English avant-garde label run by Russian emigré Leo Feigin, started releasing their records, and they established as a remarkably tight and original group -- the authors of *The Penguin Guide* bestowed their crown icon on *Catalogue: Live in East Germany* (1977-82), then changed their minds in favor of *Ancora Da Capo* (1980). I picked up those two and was duly impressed, but didn't delve deeper until now, finding a sizable cache of their records on Rhapsody. This seems to be the first -- it was, at any rate, only the second CD issued by the label. The Soviet system

was notorious for its narrow-minded focus on folk and classical music, and you can find bits of that here and there, quoted like Dexter Gordon would a nursery tune. [8]

The Ganelin Trio: *Strictly for Our Friends* (1978, Leo -01) Live in Moscow, presumably the same music as the 1984 LP only split into eight tracks instead of the earlier two sides; poignant title for a group so far removed from the Soviet mainstream, but there's nothing here that smacks of Western decadence -- this is complex, rough, inventive, demanding, and like most of their albums hard to sort out. [8]

The Ganelin Trio: *Encores* (1978-81, Leo -94) CD collection of live dates in Moscow, West Berlin, and Leningrad, the former previously released as the LP *Con Fuoco*, starting with two good titles: "It's Too Good to Be Jazz" and "Who Is Afraid of Anthony Braxton"; Vladimir Chekasin plays seven different horns, several to joke effect, which makes this something of a hash, but of course an interesting one. [7]

The Ganelin Trio: *Old Bottles* (1982-83, Leo -95) Two long pieces, "Non Troppo" and "New Wine," carved up into separate LPs back in the day (*Non Troppo* was reissued by Hat Art as 2LP with a take of "Ancora Da Capo"); each has occasional dead spots where the action withers away, only to return, often explosively; Chekasin's range and humor have rarely been more in command. [8]

The Ganelin Trio: *Con Affetto* (1983, Leo -99) The 1985 LP trimmed "Semplice" to 28:07 split over two sides, with three encores of "Mack the Knife"; the CD gives you the full 57:33 along with the same three encores; after a slow start, Ganelin does a boogie woogie sendup with Chekasin wailing, a remarkable stretch I'd like to hear more of, but even the encores collapse back into breakdown. [7]

The Ganelin Trio: *Ttaango . . . in Nickelsdorf* (1985, Leo -2CD -10) Live in Austria, originally a double LP limited to 500 copies, an extra 29:18 added to the CD; the two monster tracks go their their usual motions, complex and full of surprises, while one of the new tracks ("Umtza Umtza") works up such a frenzy they can't help but chant and cheer. [9]

The Ganelin Trio: *Opuses* (1989, Leo -90) A new trio, the old one fell apart around 1987 and this one came together after Slava (as he's billed here) Ganelin moved to Israel in 1989, with Victor Fonarov on cello and bass, Mika Markovich on drums; this shifts the focus onto Ganelin, who is strong but spotty, and when guest vocalist Uri Abramowich chimes in they fade into oblivion. [4]

Jan Garbarek

Jan Garbarek/Egberto Gismonti/Charlie Haden: *Carta de Amor* (1981, ECM 2CD -12) Previously unreleased live set the trio that produced two rather forgettable 1979 albums, *Folk Songs* and *Magico*, released then with Haden's more famous name first, but the Brazilian guitarist/pianist is central, setting the languid pace, while the sax pretties up. [6]

Jan Garbarek/Ustad Fateh Ali Khan & Musicians From Pakistan: *Ragas and Sagas* (1990, ECM) The four ragas are credited to Khan, who sings. The one "Saga" falls second on the record, and is credited to Garbarek -- sagas are, after all, Viking tales. The Pakistani musicians play tabla, sarangi, and drums, with a second vocalist. The distinction between the Norwegian and Pakistani themes is too subtle for me to figure out, but as is so often the case, Garbarek's skill at playing to the rhythm wins out. The vocals aren't compelling, and the tabla could be sharper, but it works anyway. [9]

Jan Garbarek/Miroslav Vitous/Peter Erskine: *Star* (1991, ECM) Garbarek's title cut has a fragmented, far-away feel to it, with Vitous more prominent than the usual bass player, and Erskine more subtle than the usual drummer. Four of the next five pieces are by Vitous, the exception and the finale by Erskine, leaving the seventh track to be jointly credited. Despite their relative stateliness, these pieces have real beauty -- Garbarek's tone is always something to marvel at, and the others play with great delicacy and erudition. Over many hearings Vitous, in particular, stands out. [9]

Jan Garbarek/Anouar Brahem/Shaukat Hussain: *Madar* (1992, ECM -94) Brahem plays oud, Hussain tabla, providing a background texture for Garbarek's tenor and soprano saxophones. Actually, Garbarek lays out for much of the record, letting the rhythm and texture build up before he adds his touch. [+]

Jan Garbarek/The Hilliard Ensemble: *Mnemosyne* (1998, ECM -2CD -99) The second coming of their 1994 *Officium* collaboration, expanded to two CDs. The balance, too, has swung to the singers and away from Garbarek. Fans of this kind of vocal music will love this one too. (At least I consulted one.) But I'm not much of a fan -- the scant medieval music that I do like has much more of a beat. Nonetheless, I thought *Officium* was terrific, not least for its improbability. This one, longer, slower, pretty (of course), more tedious, just feels inevitable. [5]

Red Garland

Red Garland: *Soul Junction* (1957, Prestige -07) The pianist manages to sound bluesy and soulful on his own, taking "I've Got It Bad" slow enough to make the point; the horns work best when they stay in character, as on the long title piece, with both Donald Byrd and John Coltrane contributing blues-tinged solos. [7]

The Red Garland Quintets Featuring John Coltrane: *Prestige Profiles* (1957-61, Prestige -05) And Donald Byrd, for the quintessential bebop quintet lineup. Except for one piece with a different quintet, with Richard Williams and Oliver Nelson. Starts with "Billie's Bounce," which never sounded more retro. Best thing here is Garland's own "Soul Junction," with a long intro that lets you enjoy the piano, before Coltrane enters like he's easing into a warm bath. [7]

Kenny Garrett

Kenny Garrett: *Simply Said* (1998, Warner Bros.) A lovely record. Garrett has a nice, clean tone, and can reach for a Coltrane riff when he wants to stretch out. [5]

Jacques Gauthé

Jacques Gauthé & the Creole Rice Jazz Band: *Echoes of Sidney Bechet* (1997, Good Time Jazz) Straight out of Bechet's book, beautifully realized, but nothing new. [+]

Charles Gayle

Charles Gayle with Sunny Murray & William Parker: *Kingdom Come* (1994, Knitting Factory) Gayle's piano solos reveal him to be a Cecil Taylor wannabe. Gayle returns to tenor sax for "Lord Lord," an all-time ugly, at least up to the long drum solo. More piano. More sax. It's all tough sledding.

[4]

Charles Gayle: *Testaments* (1995, Knitting Factory) A trio with Wilber Morris (bass) and Michael Wimberly (drums). Gayle starts out nasty, and gets nastier; in other words, he's always been an acquired taste (and probably a marginal one at that), and his records are inevitably more of the same. Still, about 6 minutes into the second cut ("Parables") there's a collective paroxysm which is truly notable, especially when you realize that someone is playing piano (which would be Gayle his bad self). But then Gayle picks up his saxophone again, so you can suffer through one called "Christ's Suffering" (only fitting). Actually, it's not that bad, but "Faith Evermore" is as about as hoary as Gayle gets. And there I notice a bit with both sax and piano at the same time -- is he overdubbing? [5]

Charles Gayle Quartet: *Daily Bread* (1995, Black Saint -98) The Quartet consists of Gayle (tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, viola on two cuts, and piano on two other cuts), William Parker (cello, piano on three cuts), Wilber Morris (bass), and Michael Wimberly (drums, violin on two cuts). The strings come together on the second cut, "Our Sins," an interesting setup for string quartet. Third cuts starts out with a Gayle piano solo, which runs for the 7:10 of the piece. The fourth cut starts with what sounds like bass clarinet, but it quickly breaks into runs that I've never heard before on that instrument. And here, as elsewhere on this disc, Gayle's in impressive form. One of his more varied and impressive recordings. [+]

Herb Geller

Herb Geller and His Sextet: *That Geller Feller* (1957, Fresh Sound -03) This has long been high on my search list -- a *Penguin Guide* 4-star album, by a left coast cool jazz swinger whose much later work impressed me highly. The rhythm section is what you'd expect (or hope for): Lou Levy, Ray Brown, and Lawrence Marable. The front line is a little overpopulated with Kenny Dorham and Harold Land joining Geller. Cool, elegant swing; a little more heavily arranged than the fine albums he started recording in the '90s, but a delight anyway. [9]

Herb Geller: *Playing Jazz: The Musical Autobiography of Herb Geller* (1995, Fresh Sound -97) An alto saxophonist of the West coast cool school, one of the greats, really, sets his autobiography to music, his first sax at age nine, early inspiration from Benny Carter and Charlie Parker, working with comics like Lenny Bruce, his short-lived wife, asides on Chet Baker and Joe Albany and Al Cohn; the story is fascinating, the music spot on, the skits and libretto sometimes awkwardly wedged in, worth hearing, but may be too wordy to repeat much. [8]

Stan Getz

Stan Getz, Coleman Hawkins & More: *Battle of the Saxes* (1944-46, Tradition -96) A short (28:05) sampler from the "birth of bebop" years, focusing on tenor sax with two cuts each from the teenaged Getz, the master Hawkins, Charlie Ventura (the most boppish), and Ben Webster (the hardest swinger), plus one each from Ted Nash (uncle of the better known alto player) and Don Byas (a lovely ballad), all but Hawk in quartets -- he adds yet another tenor sax great, Budd Johnson, and Emmett Berry on trumpet. [8]

Stan Getz: *West Coast Jazz* (1955, Verve -99) Nothing new here, although the ordering of the extra tracks is a bit more attractive than on *East of the Sun: The West Coast Sessions* -- a 3CD set that came

out a couple of years before this repackaging. Getz cut four LPs from 1955-57 with Lou Levy (piano), Leroy Vinnegar (bass), Shelly Manne (drums), most with Conte Candoli (trumpet), and the music throughout is superb -- not really cool, more like what bebop might be once bebop turns into real music. And this is as real as it ever got. [10]

Stan Getz: *Stan Getz in Stockholm* (1955, Verve -08) The pickup rhythm section is a pleasant surprise, led by pianist Bengt Hallberg, who later went on to cut the legendary *Jazz at the Pawnshop* albums; Getz sticks to light and airy standards, closing upbeat with "Get Happy" and "Jeepers Creepers." [8]

Stan Getz: *Award Winner* (1957, Verve -00) One of Getz' superb "west coast sessions," with Lou Levy, Leroy Vinnegar and Stan Levey. Redundant if you already have *East of the Sun*, otherwise this is a superb stretch for Getz. One minor annoyance is all the false starts padding it out at the end. [9]

Stan Getz/Gerry Mulligan/Harry Edison/Louis Bellson and the Oscar Peterson Trio: *Jazz Giants '58* (1953-57, Verve -08) Producer Norman Granz's favorite thing: an all-star jam session; four songs to stretch out on, plus a ballad medley which may be why the album tilts toward Getz, although Mulligan is the workhorse here, and Edison is as sweet as ever. [8]

Stan Getz: *Big Band Bossa Nova* (1962, Verve -08) After *Jazz Samba* sold a bit, Getz returned to the Brazilian well many times, especially over the next two years; Gary McFarland arranged and conducted the snazzy big band backdrop, and Jim Hall took up the guitar, but the key player here is the saxophonist. [7]

Stan Getz & Luiz Bonfá: *Jazz Samba Encore!* (1963, Verve -08) Getz's *Jazz Samba* breakthrough was cut with Charlie Byrd on guitar and *Big Band Bossa Nova* featured Jim Hall, but soon real Brazilians lined up to get in on the act, with guitarist-composers Bonfá and Antonio Carlos Jobim joining here; they tend to understate, but Getz takes care of that. [9]

Stan Getz: *With Guest Artist Laurindo Almeida* (1963, Verve -08) For once the guitarist is as good as the material, and the Brazilian percussionists are tuned into that, which just goes to push Getz even further. [9]

Stan Getz/Joao Gilberto: *Getz/Gilberto #2* (1964, Verve -08) A quickie follow-up to *Getz/Gilberto*, the most successful of Getz's bossa nova records, recorded live at Carnegie Hall; seems loose, disorganized, too much Gilberto, not enough Getz. [5]

Stan Getz/Astrud Gilberto: *Getz Au Go Go* (1964, Verve -07) Short live set; only three sambas to camouflage Gilberto's affectless vocals, the rest American standards that are at best quaint; Getz, of course, is sterling. [6]

Stan Getz: *Mickey One* (1965, Verve -98) A soundtrack to a movie starring what must have been a pretty young Warren Beatty. The music was composed by Eddie Sauter, whose had collaborated with Getz previously on *Focus* -- the only sax-with-strings album that was ever worth listening to just for the strings (not that Getz wasn't brilliant in his own right). This one is a lot less consistent -- perhaps an inevitable problem with soundtracks given their need for variety, although the bigger problem here is that the strings are often schmaltzy (a staple with soundtracks, as is hysterical melodrama, which pops up as well). Getz, of course, is magnificent. But while I find Sauter's music amusing even at its worst, I don't expect to make a habit of listening to it. [5]

Stan Getz: *Dynasty* (1971, Verve 2CD -09) Live in London with a guitar-organ-drums section he picked up in Paris: guitarist René Thomas and organist Eddy Louiss steer clear of soul jazz clichés, as does Getz, who's more likely here to come out fierce than to do his floating-in-air thing. [9]

Stan Getz Quartet: *Live at Montreux* 1972 (1972, Eagle Rock -13) Evidently the tenor saxophonist's new label (Columbia) wanted to push him a bit toward fusion, lining him up with a rhythm section of Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, and Tony Williams, one that he was a bit out of sorts with even though he had no trouble keeping up; I suspect this release is driven by a DVD. [5]

Stan Getz: *The Best of Two Worlds* (1975, Columbia) Title continues: "featuring João Gilberto" -- a return to the very popular bossa nova albums Getz cut with Gilberto in 1964, with Heliosa Buarque de Hollanda filling in for Gilberto's estranged wife. Strikes me as not all that well thought out: more Gilberto than Getz, but not enough for either to own it. [5]

Stan Getz: *Apasionado* (1989, Verve -09) Produced, arranged, and co-written by Herb Alpert, backed by a long list of studio hacks including strings (possibly fake), recorded two years before his death, this should be easy to dismiss, but Getz plays magnificently, and you have to pay close attention to even nitpick the backing. [8]

The Very Best of Stan Getz (1952-91, Verve -02) This 2002 showcase repeats two cuts from 1996's similar-minded *A Life in Jazz: A Musical Biography*, and shares no less than five pieces with Verve's other 2002 Getz sampler, *The Definitive Stan Getz* -- the latter having the advantage of access to Getz's early Roost recordings. More importantly, almost everything here comes from an album worth owning in its own right, and the albums in question are remarkably diverse: hard-charging be-bop with Dizzie Gillespie and J.J. Johnson, west coast cool with Shelly Manne and Lou Levy, samba with Charlie Byrd and the Gilbertos, Eddie Sauter's cubist strings (from *Focus*, the only sax-with-strings record you actually have to hear), his latter-day mainstream, and two cuts from *People Time*, his poignant duet with Kenny Barron. It's a lot to digest, and I can't help but wonder how well a neophyte might fare here, but what will immediately be obvious is that you're in the presence of one of the all-time greats. [9]

Terry Gibbs

Terry Gibbs and His Big Band: *Swing Is Here!!* (1960, Verve -09) Born Julius Gubenko, plays vibes, came up through the Dorsey, Herman, and Goodman big bands, has a ball with his own herd here; not sure who did the arrangements, but they're crisp, with sharp cats in the band and the vibes slipping and sliding over the crests. [8]

Astrud Gilberto

Astrud Gilberto: *The Astrud Gilberto Album* (1965, Verve -08) A fluke star, whose nearly featureless voice was all that "The Boy From Ipanema" needed, catapulting her from wife of star João Gilberto to her own album; no such magic here, but Antonio Carlos Jobim dishes out delicious sambas, which Marty Paich waters down with strings. [5]

Astrud Gilberto: *Look to the Rainbow* (1965-66, Verve) Gil Evans takes over the orchestration, having trouble toning it down so it doesn't upstage the singer; she is fine on prime Brazilian tunes we've learned to associate with her voice, but very weak in English. [4]

Astrud Gilberto/Walter Wanderley: *A Certain Smile, a Certain Sadness* (1966, Verve -08)

Wanderley's a Brazilian organ player swept up in the bossa nova craze, not very promising, but a better match for the singer than the elaborate orchestrations of Gil Evans. [5]

Astrud Gilberto: *Compact Jazz* (1963-67, Verve -87) Two classics. "The Girl From Ipanema," of course: her vibratoless second-language voice is perfectly clear after husband João struggles with the first verse, and forms a bridge to Stan Getz' transcendental sax solo. The other is "Summer Samba" -- as delightful as anything in the genre. [+]

João Gilberto

João Gilberto: *Amoroso/Brasil* (1976-80, Warner Brothers -93) A major figure in Brazilian music from bossa nova on, one I haven't begun to sort out -- with his gentle guitar and lax vocals he is underwhelming at first, sinuous at best, with his "'S Wonderful" a fine example (despite the strings); this combines two US albums, a fairly arbitrary sample. [8]

Dizzy Gillespie

Dizzy Gillespie/Charlie Parker: *Town Hall, New York City, June 22, 1945* (1945, Uptown -05) Jazz critics write about Charlie Parker as if he was Jesus. He came unto the world to deliver us from swing, and after a few breathtaking, turbulent years he died for our sins. His death was greeted by denial and resurrection, as in the ubiquitous "Bird Lives!" graffiti of the '50s. His acolytes have scoured the land for every scrap of solo he left, so now there are dozens of bootlegged live tapes in print -- most in execrable sound quality, but cherished nonetheless. All this reverence has always turned me off, and I've been slapped down more times than I care to recall for saying so. To my ears, which perhaps significantly had absorbed Ornette Coleman and Anthony Braxton before I ever turned to Parker, he's always been a one trick pony: he played off chord changes at breakneck speed. There's no doubt that he's an important, even pivotal, figure in jazz history. But Jesus is only for true believers, and I'm just not one. So when this newly discovered treasure came in the mail I put it on the shelf, not into the changer. Now that I've finally gotten to it, I can report: first, this is Gillespie's group, doing Gillespie's songs, which means that Parker really has to work to steal the show (which he does at least twice); the sound is pretty clean and well balanced; Symphony Sid is as boring as ever; there are no new revelations here, but this gives you an idea what the excitement was about. [8]

Dizzy Gillespie: *Shaw' Nuff* (1945-46, Musicraft -92): The quintets with Parker are the great watershed of bebop. [10]

Dizzy Gillespie Big Band: *Showtime at the Spotlite* (1946, Uptown 2CD -08) Diz came up in big bands and preferred them well into the 1950s, but this is mostly a historical curiosity, predating his Latin binge with Chano Pozo, with raw audio roughing up sometimes spectacular solos; band members include Thelonious Monk, Milt Jackson, Ray Brown, Kenny Clarke; Sarah Vaughan drops in for a cameo. [5]

Dizzy Gillespie: *Odyssey: 1945-1952* (1947-52, Savoy Jazz -3CD -02) The completism exacts a toll, as this drags a bit in the middle when Dizzy meets the strings of Johnny Richards' orchestra. But the first disc with landmarks like "Salt Peanuts" and "Shaw Nuff" and Sarah Vaughan's "Lover Man" is much more than history. [9]

Dizzy Gillespie: *Sittin' In* (1957, Verve -05) A JATP-style jam session, with the trumpet ace burning up "Dizzy Atmosphere" and "The Way You Look Tonight," separated by two ballad medleys favoring the tenor saxophonists, abundant, profusive, and profound: Stan Getz, Paul Gonsalves, and Coleman Hawkins; with Wynton Kelly, Wendell Marshall, and J.C. Heard. [9]

Dizzy Gillespie: *Dizzy on the French Riviera* (1962, Verve -09) Mostly Latin fair, with two songs from pianist Lalo Schiffrin and two more from Antonio Carlos Jobim, and Hungarian guitarist Elek Bacsik throwing some curveballs; with 7 songs totalling 51:59, they get to stretch out a little; while Gillespie's played hotter trumpet, he doesn't disappoint here. [8]

Dizzy Gillespie: *Dizzy Goes Hollywood* (1963, Verve -08) Themes and hits from *Exodus*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Cleopatra*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Lolita*, a "Walk on the Wild Side" and a "Days of Wine and Roses" -- smartly played by Gillespie's quintet, even on songs so set they can't bust them loose. [7]

Dizzy Gillespie: *The Cool World* (1964, Verve -08) Nominally a soundtrack to Shirley Clarke's film about young people growing up in Harlem, the music written by Mal Waldron, set pieces that are carefully measured with none of the clichés or atmospherics that make up most soundtracks -- note that four song titles mention "Duke"; Gillespie's quintet includes James Moody on tenor sax and flute, and Kenny Barron on piano. [8]

Dizzy Gillespie: *Live at the 1965 Monterey Jazz Festival* (1965, MJF -07) Small group with James Moody (flute, tenor sax), Kenny Barron (piano), and Big Black (congas), running through a mixed bag of bebop, with the calypso "Poor Joe" thrown in for Gillespie's vocal; sound is a little thin, and it's all very slapdash, not least the comedy. [+]

Dizzy Gillespie: *Career 1937-1992* (1937-92, Shout! Factory -2CD -05) It's harder to stuff Gillespie into a 2-CD box than Baker, not just because there's more undeniable Gillespie: the intense joy and pure excitement of the music defies containment. They missed an opportunity to spin separate small group and big band discs, but the flow is hardly hampered, and the big band tracks convincingly expand on the ideas while driving home their magnitude. My only complaint is how much they missed. Every track here suggests an alternative they didn't take. [10]

Jimmy Giuffre

The Jimmy Giuffre 3: *The Easy Way* (1959, Verve -03) With Jim Hall (guitar) and Ray Brown (bass), Giuffre is credited on the back cover with saxophone, but pictured on the front with clarinet. [5]

Jimmy Giuffre/Paul Bley/Steve Swallow: *Conversations With a Goose* (1996, Soul Note) Although Giuffre may forever be best known for having penned "Four Brothers," the balance of his career has been far removed from Woody Herman's big band bombast. Since the late '50s he's been making delicate but difficult music, mostly on clarinet, usually in small groups, frequently accompanied by Bley and Swallow. Their 1961 trio recordings are considered landmarks, the pinnacle of Giuffre's career. This 35-year reunion effort is of a piece with their early works -- the cover picture of the three gray-hairs doesn't make this music any easier to decipher, although what does help is how it breaks down into solo work: Bley's piano patiently working through similar but more accessible runs, Swallow's electric bass sometimes sounding like guitar. I've never really gotten Giuffre, and this one is no exception, but I find this one relatively entertaining. David Ogilvy used to advise to cultivate your idiosyncrasies when you're young, otherwise people will think you've gone bonkers when you get old.

Thirty-five years down the line I still don't understand Giuffre, but more and more he sounds like himself, and we're finally getting used to that. [+]

Benny Golson

Benny Golson: *Free* (1960-62, Chess/GRP) This combines two albums with mainstream groups, providing a good taste of Golson's sound, especially on ballad material. [+]

Paul Gonsalves

Paul Gonsalves/Earl Hines: *Paul Gonsalves Meets Earl Hines* (1970-72, Black Lion -92) LP originally listed Hines first, picturing him on the cover under the title *It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing!*, so it's curious that the CD reissue elevated Ellington's postwar tenor saxophonist -- possibly because Gonsalves had so little in print under his own name; the sax sounds thin, and the pianist tends to hold back, emerging delectably on "Blue Sands," his only original here, and his long intro to "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good." [6]

Mick Goodrick

Mick Goodrick: *In Pas(s)ing* (1978, ECM -01) American jazz guitarist, influenced Pat Metheny and taught John Scofield and Bill Frisell; not many records, but this one develops clean, crystal clear lines, impressive enough but John Surman juggles three reeds -- bass clarinet, baritone sax, soprano sax -- in a tour de force. [9]

Benny Goodman

Benny Goodman: *Ken Burns Jazz* (1927-58, Columbia/Legacy -00) Goodman's role in the Ken Burns (sounds like King James, doesn't it?) Bible of Jazz is substantial; not surprising, given that Goodman was the nexus where good jazz finally met up with the jazz age mass market. This samples broadly, cutting a wide swath through Goodman's many band configurations, if anything shortchanging his virtuosity. [9]

The Benny Goodman Quartet: *Together Again!* (1963, RCA -64) With Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson, and Gene Krupa, each a major star after playing with Goodman in the late 1930s, but only Hampton is fully up to snuff at this late date -- not that the clarinetist has lost his touch. Starts off with a piece from Charlie Christian, another Goodman alumnus long gone. [7]

Dexter Gordon

Dexter Gordon: *The Chronological Dexter Gordon* 1943-1947 (1943-47, Classics -99) The tenor sax great's first sides, opening with Nat Cole and Sweets Edison, his style nearly fully formed with just a hint of Prez, followed by a series of signature riff pieces ("Blow, Mr. Dexter," "Dexter's Deck," "Dexter's Cuttin' Out," "Dexter's Minor Mad," "Long Tall Dexter"), all topped by "Dexter Rides Again"; includes his famous joust with Wardell Gray ("The Chase"), his novel "Chromatic Aberration," and a taste of his ballad style. [9]

Dexter Gordon: *Settin' the Pace* (1945-47, Savoy) This is bebop-influenced, fast, jump pieces, including a session with Fats Navarro, with a couple of ballads to show off Dexter's tone and phrasing. Impressive throughout. [9]

Dexter Gordon: *Daddy Plays the Horn* (1955, Shout! Factory -05) Between drugs and busts, bebop's first major tenor saxophonist recorded little in the mid-'50s; this exception shows that it had nothing to do with his skills -- the big tone, the powerful swing, his wit and demeanor are all evident, as is Kenny Drew's redoubtable piano. [9]

Dexter Gordon: *Doin' Alright* (1961, Blue Note): Freddie Hubbard adds little to this one, and the rhythm section is run of the mill, but Gordon on his own is glorious, as big and bold as ever. [+]

Dexter Gordon: *Dexter Calling . . .* (1961, Blue Note -04): A quartet with his old bop chums including Kenny Drew, leaving him a lot of space to blow, and with eight pieces he casts his net wide enough to show his stuff. [+]

Dexter Gordon: *One Flight Up* (1964, Blue Note -04): Cut in Paris on his way out, the line-up with Donald Byrd a matter of convenience, the pieces stretched out into long hard bop jams; almost ordinary, for Gordon, that is. [5]

Dexter Gordon: *Gettin' Around* (1965, Blue Note -06) The last of the Blue Notes; Gordon sounds relaxed, his huge sound towering over light but sprightly accompaniment from Bobby Hutcherson on vibes and Barry Harris on piano. [7]

Dexter Gordon: *Clubhouse* (1965, Blue Note -07) The last of a series, cut just before Gordon moved to Europe and stuck in Blue Note's vaults until 1979; both Gordon and Freddie Hubbard are in typical form, all the more so on the slow pieces that showcase their greatness. [8]

Dexter Gordon: *Night Ballads: Montreal 1977* (1977, Uptown -12) Quartet with George Cables, Rufus Reid, and Eddie Gladden, selected from a four-night stand to emphasize the slow stuff, with 16-20 minute versions of "Lover Man," "You've Changed," "Old Folks," and "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" -- not that everyone seems clued into the concept, and the sound is a bit harsh. [6]

Dexter Gordon: *Manhattan Symphonie* (1978, Columbia/Legacy -05) Nothing fancy here, just a good solid quartet outing, with George Cables on piano, a couple of years after Gordon's triumphal homecoming; a little more subdued than his live recordings at the time -- *Live at Carnegie Hall, Nights at the Keystone* -- a fine stretch of records. [+]

Dexter Gordon: *Jazz Moods: 'Round Midnight* (1976-85, Columbia/Legacy -05) A little too rough for ballads, although he does connect mightily with "'Round Midnight" -- from the first album in the series, *Homecoming*. Pretty uneven for a comp, mixing barebones quartets with big band atmospherics and a singer on one cut. [4]

Dexter Gordon: *Round Midnight [Original Motion Picture Soundtrack]* (1986, Columbia) A low budget arty movie about the jazz life, based loosely on Francis Paudras' memoirs of a down-and-out Bud Powell in Paris, the lead reconceived as a tenor saxophonist, played by real life sax giant Dexter Gordon in a performance so nonchalant you're tempted to believe it's his own story. Says something about popular culture's pecking order of fame that so many major jazz stars could be assembled for so little money. (Herbie Hancock's small role is especially memorable, again because it so perfectly fits type.) Soundtracks are normally mere byproducts of the film industry, but this one promised to lure in

people who don't normally trust their taste in jazz. Still, those who did dive in found themselves in a mess: only 5 of 11 tracks feature Gordon, who in the film only pulls himself together when blowing into his horn. The rest is atmosphere -- unless you're into starspotting best mulling away in the background. [6]

Jon Gordon

Jon Gordon Quintet: *Ask Me Now* (1994, Criss Cross -95) Tim Hagans lays in some terrific trumpet. Bill Charlap ditto on piano. Larry Grenadier and Billy Drummond are a fine rhythm section. Gordon's fine too. They really tear up the joint on "Giant Steps." Closes with a subdued but nice Monk piece, "Ask Me Now." Not sure that it's really special, but it's first class. [+]

Stéphane Grappelli

Stéphane Grappelli/Baden Powell: *La Grande Réunion* (1974, Musidisc) Half of this is a small group which mostly does light Brazilian pieces, where Grappelli's violin adds flavor to Powell's rhythm: very nice. The other half is backed by a cloying, anonymous sounding orchestra, reworking pop material as overworked as "Yesterday" and "You Are the Sunshine of My Life": dull and dreary even as muzak. [4]

Georg Gräwe

Georg Gräwe Quintet: *New Movements* (1976, FMP) Pianist-led group, with trumpet, sax, bass, and drums -- no names that I instantly recognize -- in what may be his first record, more than a decade earlier than anything AMG or Discogs list; the 20-year-old pianist would have been the most unknown of the lot at the time, but he shows remarkable poise in the midst of a very lively free-for-all. [7]

Georg Gräwe Quintet: *Pink Pong* (1977, FMP) An early, little noted album by the German pianist as he was finding his way to rhythmic freedom, punctuated by scattered trumpet and soprano/tenor sax (Horst Grabosch and Harald Dau, two names I don't recall running into elsewhere). [6]

Georg Graewe/Ernst Reijseger/Gerry Hemingway: *Sonic Fiction* (1989, Hatology -07) Piano-cello-drums free jazz trio, the tone and temper between the tinkly piano and the prickly cello, with percussion toned down to the same sonic range, neither driving nor lagging. [8]

Graewe/Reijseger/Hemingway: *Saturn Cycle* (1994, Music & Arts) Reijseger's cello is a stronger lead instrument than your basic bass, which makes this avant-jazz trio a more equitable community. But Graewe's sharp, measured keyboard work invariably triumphs over the clamor, in one of the most invigorating, enticing trios I've heard. [9]

Bennie Green

Bennie Green: *Soul Stirrin'* (1958, Blue Note -97) The trombone player, in a sextet with two saxophones (Gene Ammons and Billy Root -- the latter played with Gillespie and Kenton), piano (Sonny Clark), bass (Ike Isaacs), and drums (Elvin Jones). They can kick up a storm, as on "We Wanna Cook." But the first real standout cut is "That's All," done at a snail's pace with a long trombone solo to start, then a gorgeous Gene Ammons sax solo. The bonus mono take to the title cut is another fine

Ammons showcase, a bluesy take on a Babs Gonzales piece. [+]

Grant Green

Grant Green: *The Latin Bit* (1961, Blue Note -07) The latin percussion is professional enough, including Willie Bobo's drums and Patato's congas, but they can't inspire Green to break out of his usual groove; two later cuts with Ike Quebec and Sonny Clark work better, with the chekere gone and the congas reduced to atmosphere. [5]

Grant Green: *Born to Be Blue* (1962, Blue Note) This seems to be one of Green's finer albums, with his typical guitar runs and Sonny Clark's piano propping up Ike Quebec's languid tenor sax. [9]

Grant Green: *Goin' West* (1962, Blue Note -04) From "On Top of Old Smokey" to "Red River Valley" and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds," the air is fresh and the guitar sweet. [+]

Grant Green: *Live at Club Mozambique* (1972, Blue Note -06) The guitarist's funk groove had become so ordinary in last years at Blue Note that much of what he recorded got stuck on the shelves, like this live date with Ronnie Foster on organ, Idris Muhammad on drums, and two saxophonists -- Houston Person is the better known, but Clarence Thomas played rougher, which is what shakes this album alive. [6]

Grant Green: *Ain't It Funky Now: The Original Jam Master, Volume One* (1969-72, Blue Note -05) Green's first stretch with Blue Note yielded twenty albums in a five year span, ending in 1965. Most featured Green's clean and vibrant guitar lines in simple groups -- often organ trios or with piano-bass-drums, some with a horn or two. Green's roots were in blues (*Born to Be Blue*) and spirituals (*Feelin' the Spirit*) where he exuded easy-going soulfulness, but he could also keep up with Blue Note's more avant artists like Joe Henderson and Bobby Hutcherson on *Idle Moments*. Blue Note's heyday coincided with Green's tenure, but following Alfred Lion's 1967 retirement the label struggled to stay afloat, turning more and more to commercial fusion. Green returned from 1969-72, cutting seven funk-fusion groove albums, with electric bass, electric piano or organ, and secondary roles for horns, vibes, and/or congas. This series reconceives the albums as three discs, each consisting of a song or two from five or six albums, sorted by temperature. This is the tepid one, with tunes by James Brown, Smokey Robinson, the Isleys, and Kool & the Gang, and Claude Barteel's tenor sax warm enough to notice. But the only notable player here is the guitarist. [+]

Grant Green: *For the Funk of It: The Original Jam Master, Volume Two* (1969-72, Blue Note -05) With all the real funk tunes on Volume One, this has softer beats and looser textures, but overall holds up about as well -- mainly because the guitarist gets more space for more licks, and he's the one who matters. [+]

Grant Green: *Mellow Madness: The Original Jam Master, Volume Three* (1969-72, Blue Note -05) Third helping, aren't you sated by now? the pieces are longer, slower, more aimless, except for *Sgt. Pepper's* "A Day in the Life," which grows in stature; they could have filled a Volume Four, but they were probably right to let the funk stop here. [5]

Bob Greene

Bob Greene: *St. Peter Street Strutters* (1964, Delmark -09) A Jelly Roll Morton specialist rumbles through a trad set at Preservation Hall in New Orleans, backed the old-fashioned way with banjo and tuba, with Ernie Carson filling in for the late King Oliver. [8]

Burton Greene

Burton Greene Quartet (1965, ESP) Greene is a pianist who dove straight into free jazz from his first recordings in 1964, recorded occasionally over the '70s and '80s and '90s, and seems to be making a comeback now -- he's had a couple of recent recordings on CIMP, has a new one announced by Drimala, and there's a feature article on him in *Signal to Noise*. His two ESP albums popped up recently at the local used store; I took this as a sign, and picked up this one -- partly because I couldn't hear the trio over the ambient noise in the store, mostly because I could hear Marion Brown here, and he sounds great. The bassist is Henry Grimes, of Ayler fame. The quartet is rounded out with a percussionist: Dave Grant on two cuts, Tom Price on the other two. (Price seems to be the official quartet member.) There's also an extra sax on the fourth cut, someone named Frank Smith. (The notes are uncommonly good here, and even they don't know who Smith is, but they've heard that he died.) Grimes gets in a very nice arco solo, but most of the action is between Brown and Greene. Been a long time since I've heard Brown, and I don't remember him being quite this far out, but he seems to be in total command, able to leap registers, slur, squawk, and shout nimbly and precisely. Greene's piano is similarly adventurous. It may be premature to rate this, given that I have a sizable chunk of Jimmy Lyons and Cecil Taylor to re-listen to, but I'm impressed. [9]

Al Grey

Al Grey: *Snap Your Fingers* (1962, Verve -03) Trombonist Grey's mainstream group featured tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell, but the surprise star here is the very young and nimble Bobby Hutcherson on vibes. [5]

Johnny Griffin

Johnny Griffin Quartet (1956, Verve -04) Way too short at 26:15, especially since each of the eight songs is so sharply etched that you expect much more to develop. [+]

Johnny Griffin: *The Congregation* (1957, Blue Note -06) A bebop tenor saxophonist given to heavy blowing sessions, this quartet layers his big bold sound over Sonny Clark's free-flowing piano, a simple formula that pays off handsomely. [9]

The Johnny Griffin and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis Quintet: *Tough Tenors* (1960, Jazzland/OJC -04) First of many jam jousts between two tenor saxophonists who knew their bebop but didn't let it keep them from pandering to the crowds. [+]

Johnny Griffin: *You Leave Me Breathless* (1967, Black Lion -72) A set recorded live at Montmartre Jazzhuis in Copenhagen with American expats Kenny Drew and Albert Heath plus every traveler's favorite Danish bassist, Niels-Henning Ørsted-Pedersen; starts sloppy with Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning," but the tenor saxophonist regains his tone and poise on the ballads, he can always run the fast ones, and

he ends with a masterful solo stretch. [6]

David Grisman

David Grisman/John Hartford/Mike Seeger: *Retrograss* (1989, Acoustic Disc) Grisman is a jazz-influenced mandolinist, makes his living on the bluegrass circuit, where is he something of a legend. He's one of those SFFRs, someone I've never run across even though I've know I should for a long time now. Hartford and Seeger are estimable folkies, but their roles here are secondary. The songbook here strays from the traditional, attempting to retrofy the likes of Bob Dylan, Chuck Berry, and Lennon/McCartney, although they take some liberties, renaming a famous Leiber/Stoller song "Hound Dawg." While I find "When I'm Sixty-Four" rather cute, the exercise as a whole feels square, the music rather stately. [5]

Marty Grosz

Marty Grosz & Keith Ingham and Their Paswonky Serenaders: *Unsaturated Fats* (1990, Stomp Off) With Peter Ecklund (cornet), Joe Muranyi (clarinet, soprano sax), Dan Barrett (trombone), Greg Cohen (bass), Arnie Kinsella (drums). Ingham plays piano, like he's been doing it all his life, which he probably has; Grosz plays guitar, banjo, and sings a bit -- the handful of vocals here neither bring Waller back to life, nor kick him up a notch, as Armstrong can do. Grosz is sort of the Eddie Condon of Germany -- he's dependable on rhythm, rounds up ace musicians, and makes sure everyone has a dandy ole time. But while these guys take to swing just fine, they're basically a trad band, and what works best is when the horns start to see-saw. Superb work. [9]

Vince Guaraldi

Vince Guaraldi Trio: *Jazz Impressions of Black Orpheus* (1962, Fantasy/OJC -10) Front cover has the hit song "Cast Your Fate to the Wind" in larger type than the title, and indeed the melody jumps right out at you; otherwise the piano trio's impressions make for minor pleasures, like the slightly oblique "Moon River." [7]

Vince Guaraldi: *The Charlie Brown Suite and Other Favorites* (1968, Bluebird -03) My impression is that Guaraldi is a competent but not especially interesting jazz pianist -- I group him loosely in the same bag as George Shearing and Andre Previn without really knowing much about any of them. He probably did his critical standing a permanent blow by tying into the Peanuts franchise, but it no doubt helped his bank account. This item came in the mail, which makes it the first Guaraldi record that I've actually heard. The good news is that the jaunty little themes are pleasant enough. The bad news is that he decided to move uptown in orchestrating them for a classical music ensemble. If you like that sort of thing, you might find this amusing. I don't, which means I find that this meanders in and out of tediousness, especially when the strings kick in. But I like the little latin kick on "Charlie Brown Theme." [4]

Lars Gullin

Lars Gullin: *1953-55 Vol. 8: Danny's Dream* (1953-55, Dragon -05) One of the more obscure records ever granted a crown recommendation by Richard Cook and Brian Morton's *Penguin Guide to Jazz*

Recordings was *The Great Lars Gullin Vol. 5*, an LP that vanished from print shortly after it was cited in the first edition. Since then, Sweden's baritone sax great's recordings have been reshuffled into a new series, which has been coming out about one per year and has now reached *Vol. 11*. The sessions from the old *Vol. 5* finally resurfaced in the new *Vol. 8*, along with a few extras that add a second sax (tenor) to a surprisingly light and tasty quartet -- Rolf Berg's guitar is often the secret, but Gullin himself is key. [9]

Ulrich Gumpert

Gumpert Sommer Duo Plus Manfred Herring: *The Old Song* (1973, FMP -74) Pianist Ulrich Gumpert and drummer Günter Sommer, who continued to work as a duo throughout the decade, add Herring's alto sax to the mayhem here; Herring's in high screech mode, while the principals do a rousing job of smashing things up; could have degenerated into noise, but builds something out of every lurch and crash. [8]

Ulrich Gumpert & Gunter 'Baby' Sommer: . . . *Jetzt Geht's Kloß* (1978, FMP -79) The Gumpert Sommer (piano-drums) Duo on their own doing what comes naturally: the pianist pulling all sorts of striking melodic fragments out of the ether, fast and hard-edged, with the drums accenting their inherent percusiveness; two long improvs, only thinning out a bit well into the second. [8]

Ulrich Gumpert/Günter Sommer: *Versäuminisse* (1979, FMP -80) Piano-drums duo, something the label liked to crank up and smash together, in this case drawing on a pair with nearly a decade's experience of doing just that. [7]

Barry Guy

Barry Guy: *Fizzles* (1991, Maya -93) Solo bass, inevitable for an avant-gardist of his stature but a while coming as Guy has mostly focused on large groups; a broad range of sounds, but little envelope pushing, focusing on moderate arco melodies, pushing his unique musicality. [7]

Barry Guy and the Now Orchestra: *Study/Witch Gong Game 11/10* (1994, Maya) Away from his London Jazz Composers Orchestra, the avant-bassist finds a similarly disposed monster of an orchestra in Vancouver, one which rarely records except to honor its guest stars; two pieces here, both heat up, especially the long closer, and that's when the stars break loose. [6]

Barry Guy/Mats Gustafsson/Raymond Strid Trio with Marilyn Crispell: *Gryffgryffgryffs* (1996, Music & Arts -97) Bassist Guy is a recurrent figure in Crispell's discography; drummer Strid is a guy you look up when playing in Sweden, where this was originally a radio program; the Norwegian saxophonist is in subdued form, playing a little cat-and-mouse game with the pianist, impishly favoring the mouse. [7]

Charlie Haden

Charlie Haden: *The Golden Number* (1976, A&M -77) Bassist, came up in Ornette Coleman's quartet and went on to a remarkable career, with this set of duets relatively early; four pieces, one each with Don Cherry (trumpet, flute), Archie Shepp (tenor sax), Hampton Hawes (piano), and Coleman (trumpet, played slow); Shepp and Hawes make the strongest impression, while his former bandmates

draw out the bassist. [8]

Charlie Haden/Joe Henderson/Al Foster: *The Montreal Tapes* (1989, Verve -04) The seventh of eight concerts from Charlie Haden week in Montreal 1989, probably skipped over because it's nothing more than you'd expect, but three years after Henderson's death they clearly miss the big guy. [+]

Al Haig

Al Haig: *Al Haig Today!* (1965, Fresh Sound -91) An important bebop pianist, especially in the early 1950s, knocked out this trio with Ed DeHass on bass and Jim Kappes on drums; one original, the rest standards, the melodies nicely laid out, nothing fancy piled on top. [6]

Jim Hall

Jim Hall: *Concierto* (1975, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) An unassuming back-to-basics guy, called his first (1957) album *Jazz Guitar*, and was still trying to establish himself when Taylor handed him this blank check; too much talent to balance, with Roland Hanna's piano as prominent as the leader's guitar, alto saxophonist Paul Desmond largely wasted, but Chet Baker's trumpet is memorable, a nice fit. [8]

Andy Hamilton

Andy Hamilton: *Jamaica by Night* (1994, World Circuit) I suppose you could call him the Doc Cheatham of Jamaica: he cut his first album at age 72, but he's played his jazz-informed-by-calypso forever. (This is the follow-up.) But the opening calypso both recalls Sonny Rollins and suggests that Hamilton is to Rollins as Norris Turney was to Johnny Hodges: hopelessly outclassed. Then Hamilton takes a vocal on "Every Day I Have the Blues," and he's no Joe Williams (let alone Jimmy Rushing) either. But he sings and plays at least as well as Doc Cheatham (who was no Red Allen, let alone Louis Armstrong) did when he stepped forth in his 70s, and the closing calypso leaves you wishing for more. [5]

Chico Hamilton

Drummer from Los Angeles, led his own bands from 1955 on, often featuring flute and/or guitar for a light, airy sound, often with Latin percussion.

Chico Hamilton: *Three Faces of Chico/Gongs East!* (1958-59, Collectables -05) Two albums, notable primarily for Eric Dolphy's flute, bass clarinet, and sax; *Three Faces* is a three-sided mix of solo drum pieces, old-fashioned crooning, and quintet pieces; *Gongs* would be straighter but for Dolphy and Nathan Gershman's cello; this fits into the rage for new directions, without really finding one. [5]

Chico Hamilton: *El Chico* (1965, Impulse) Floats along nicely with Willie Bobo and Victor Pantoja spicing up the percussion, opening up for tasty solos by guitarist Gabor Szabo, as well as flute and alto sax by Sadao Watanabe. [5]

Chico Hamilton: *The Further Adventures of El Chico* (1966, Impulse) Ten cuts, only three topping 4:00, with scattered lineups, some like outtakes, some dabbling in saccharine pop hits ("Daydream,"

"Monday Monday"). Gabor Szabo and Charlie Mariano have some nice moments, but only Clark Terry's got his mojo working. [4]

Scott Hamilton

The Scott Hamilton Quintet in Concert (1983, Concord) Average, run-of-the-mill Hamilton. [+]

Lionel Hampton

Lionel Hampton: *Founder of the Jazz Vibes: 1930-1944* (1930-44, Jazz Legends -03) Not just the first major vibes player, Hampton was a networker who parlayed connections to Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman into a legendary series of late-'30s all-star sessions -- how does a one-song lineup with Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins, Chu Berry, Ben Webster, and Charlie Christian grab you? -- and in the '40s led his own r&b-flavored juggernaut, represented here by both the Illinois Jacquet and Arnett Cobb versions of "Flying Home." This touches on all the bases, but leaves out some obvious ones. Hampton sings seven of eight pieces with vocals -- a sly and disarming singer. [9]

Lionel Hampton Orchestra: *Mustermesse Basel 1953 Part 2* (1953, TCB -08) Another Swiss radio shot, with the vibraphonist's big band -- names include Art Farmer, Clifford Brown, Jimmy Cleveland, Gigi Gryce, and Quincy Jones -- doing their usual "Hey-Ba-Ba-Re-Bop": "Setting the Pace," "Flying Home," "Drinking Wine," always "On the Sunny Side of the Street." [6]

Herbie Hancock

Herbie Hancock: *Thrust* (1974, Columbia) Never any doubt about his talent, nor his nose for what sells, which following Miles Davis's fusion breakthrough meant electric keybs pounding out tight funk rhythms. *Headhunters* was his big break, and this just pushes the formula further, its redeeming merit that he was cranking them out tighter than anyone else. [7]

Herbie Hancock: *The Piano* (1978, Columbia/Legacy -04) Although Hancock is universally considered as one of the most important pianists in jazz history, I've never managed to get a good feel for just what he sounds like, or what he does, as a pianist. His role in the Miles Davis Quintet is well known; he made some marvelous records under his own name for Blue Note in the '60s; he did some interesting fusion work in the '70s, in a couple of cases portending breakthroughs, in others dead ends. Since then he's inconsistently straddled fusion and mainstream. Solo work often brings out the individuality in a pianist, revealing idiosyncrasies that color their group work. But in Hancock's case the performance is too subtle to enlighten, and not flamboyant enough to entertain. [5]

Herbie Hancock: *V.S.O.P.: Live Under the Sky* (1979, Columbia/Legacy -2CD -04) Not great jazz, but these live-in-Tokyo sets are still fun; after all, great jazz musicians can fake it at the drop of a hat, and all five superstars have their moments, especially Ron Carter and Tony Williams; the second set is previously unreleased, repeating the same set list to more scattered effect. [+]

The Essential Herbie Hancock (1962-98, Columbia/Legacy -2CD -06) Most of the cuts here are Columbias but it's hard to argue that they're not representative given the task of covering his full career. They're also the most useful -- if you don't know Hancock's legendary '60s work, the six cuts here only shame you into seeking out more. The fusion-heavy Columbias, on the other hand, need condensation,

and this does a valiant and useful job of sifting. Hancock's problem with fusion was that he was always too urbane to rock -- only the machine-funk albums of the '80s begin to bring the noise -- but he found new ways to play jazz on electric keyboards. [7]

John Handy

An alto saxophonist, originally from Dallas but long based in San Francisco; perhaps best known for his stint with Mingus, although his 1965 *Live at the Monterey Jazz Festival* has its fans. He has a couple dozen widely scattered albums, some bop, crossover, world fusion, unified only by his sweet tone and disposition.

John Handy: *Hard Work* (1976, Impulse) Swept up in Impulse's crossover phase, Handy works hard to keep the sax flying high and his undistinguished band's funk deep in the groove. And while vocals usually ruin these things, he makes them work too. [6]

John Handy: *Carnival* (1977, Impulse) Intended to be his funk party album, filled up with even more keybs and congas and vocals, the it works best when they keep the structure clean, as with "Watch Your Money Go" -- a blues chant lit up by Handy's soaring sax solo. And on ballads like "Make Her Mine" Handy's vocals are a pleasant surprise -- he's much more pleasing than, to pick an apposite example, George Benson. [5]

John Hardee

John Hardee: *Hardee's Partee: The Forgotten Texas Tenor* (1946-49, Ocium -02) One guy who hadn't forgotten was James Carter, who recorded Hardee's "Lunatic" on *JC on the Set*. It's easy enough to see what attracted Carter: a tone similar to Don Byas, a style that owed Chu Berry and complemented Illinois Jacquet. In 1946, Hardee found himself dumped from the Army into a New York torn between r&b and bebop, and while these cuts are neither they bear witness to the chaos of the times. By 1950 he had returned to Dallas and settled into the obscurity of a regular job, and he died with nothing in print in 1984. But he's back now. [9]

Joe Harriott

Joe Harriott: *Free Form* (1960, Redial) Harriott was a little-known alto saxophonist from Jamaica whose early '60s free jazz albums were often compared to Ornette Coleman. This is a very interesting album. [9]

Gene Harris

Gene Harris Quartet: *Live in London* (1996, Resonance -08) A popular pianist in the Oscar Peterson mode with an occasional nod to Erroll Garner, not as well known in large part because he spent most of his career recording first as the Three Sounds, then in bassist Ray Brown's trio; Jim Mullen's sinuous guitar enlarges this from trio to quartet. [8]

Gary Hassay

Ye Ren [Gary Hassay/William Parker/Toshi Makihara]: *Another Shining Path* (1998, Drimala -99) Hassay plays alto saxophone, and is reputedly a bulwark of the Allentown PA avant-jazz scene. (Which may answer the burning question of why AMM recorded *Live in Allentown USA*.) Makihara is a drummer from Philadelphia, who's also recorded with Thurston Moore. Parker is, by comparison, an international superstar. As a trio, they aim for utter democracy, but as a practical matter Hassay and Makihara leave Parker a lot of space, and work around him carefully, which is what makes this such a good showcase for Parker's art. [+]

Coleman Hawkins

Coleman Hawkins: *The King of the Tenor Sax 1929-1943* (1929-43, Jazz Legends -03) This skips past Hawkins' early work with Fletcher Henderson and others where he established the tenor saxophone as the central instrument in swing orchestras -- two cuts with the Mound City Blowers and one with Red Allen already look forward -- and focuses on his improvisational ideas within small groups. Hawkins' key innovation was his ability to improvise around the melody and finally to posit wholly new melodies based on the changes to old ones: the definitive example was his 1939 recording of "Body and Soul" -- completely novel, brilliantly formed, nothing short of majestic, a challenge for the listener to reassemble into something familiar. That performance sits midway here, whereas all other early Hawkins comps end with it, and all modern Hawkins comps begin with it. It's presaged by Benny Carter's famous arrangement to "Honeysuckle Rose," where Hawkins' solo leaps into the stratosphere, and a sax-piano duo of "Stardust" nearly as clever. The second half follows Hawkins through the development of modern jazz as the art of improvisation, up to a singular version of "The Man I Love." If you tried to simplify jazz sax to a model as simple as a tree, the trunk would be Hawkins, with Sonny Rollins standing on his shoulders. Everyone else is just a branch. [10]

Coleman Hawkins: *The Bebop Years* (1939-49, Proper -4CD) Hawkins invented jazz saxophone back in the '20s, and pushed the tenor sax to the front of the horn section in the '30s, but these were the years when he really hit his stride. One magnificent performance after another. [10]

Coleman Hawkins: *The Hawk Flies High* (1957, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) Makes it look easy, too, lifted by warm brass from Idrees Suleiman and J.J. Johnson, soaring over a rhythm section that layers Hank Jones bebop on Jo Jones swing, swooping and diving and snatching the listener's attention with surprisingly effortless grace; only complaint is sometimes Hawk makes it look too easy. [9]

Coleman Hawkins: *The High and Mighty Hawk* (1958, Felsted) This one I've heard before, on a 1988 London CD, and it looks like it's later been reissued with extra tracks; with Buck Clayton, Hank Jones, Ray Brown, and Mickey Sheen, starts with one of Hawkins' best upbeat blues, remains superb even on the slowest ballads. [9]

Coleman Hawkins: *Moodsville* (1960, Fresh Sound -03) Two 1960 albums on Crown with Thad Jones (trumpet) and Eddie Costa (piano/vibes), in 2010 remastered as *The Hawk Swings: The Crown Sessions*; the rhythm section swings nicely, but isn't especially engaged let alone commanding, at least by his standards; Jones closes strong, but he's never been a guy who fights for the spotlight, so it takes him a while to step up. [7]

Coleman Hawkins: *Today and Now* (1962, Impulse -96) A quartet album with Tommy Flanagan on piano, gets off to a frisky start with "Go Li'l Liza" -- his limbering up of "Li'l Liza Jane" couldn't possibly be more charming -- then moseys through a series of ballads, seemingly effortless but little short of magnificent. [10]

The Best of Coleman Hawkins (1958-62, Prestige -04) An inconsistent series of albums, poorly organized and indifferently recorded, but especially on ballads Hawkins breaks through with his usual brilliance. The best-of samples but scarcely improves on the best of the albums, which I make to be *Soul, At Ease*, and *The Hawk Relaxes*. [9]

Coleman Hawkins: *Desafinado* (1963, Impulse -11) Subtitled *Plays Bossa Nova & Jazz Samba*, a perfunctory submission to a fad that Stan Getz started. The extra guitar and percussion forces everything into a samba beat, but nothing -- not even songs by Jobim and Gilberto -- can keep Hawkins from sounding like himself. A rather silly album, but it's impossible to listen to him without feeling pleasure. [6]

Clifford Hayes

Clifford Hayes and the Dixieland Jug Blowers (1927-28, Yazoo) Hayes played violin, while Earl McDonald played jug, Cal Smith banjo/guitar, and Hense Grundy trombone -- that's the core lineup for fourteen scratchy tunes that sound more jazz than blues, but come out of a primitive interstice where the distinction hardly matters. Unlike the Memphis Jug Band, there's not consistent vocal feel here (five vocals, three singers). And the primitivism doesn't stop when the piano is taken over by one Earl Hines. Tough call. [+]

Tubby Hayes

Tubby Hayes: *New York Sessions* (1961, Columbia -90) He's a legend in the UK, but in the US he is only known (if at all) as a legend in the UK. This is his only release I've seen on a US label, and it's long-out-of-print. But on this evidence he's an exceptionally fluent saxophonist -- long, eloquent postbop lines. Clark Terry's prominent billing is mostly packaging, but where he pops up he is his usual self, and Horace Parlan's piano is a treat. [9]

The Tubby Hayes Quintet: *Late Spot at Scott's* (1962, Verve -06) Live set at Ronnie Scott's, home base for England's foremost tenor saxophonist of his brief heyday (d. 1973 at 38); an energetic hard bop quintet, with underrated Jimmy Deuchar on trumpet and better known Gordon Beck on piano, does some interesting things on the ballad "Angel Eyes" then breaks loose, especially on the burner "Yeah!" [7]

Roy Haynes

Roy Haynes/Phineas Newborn/Paul Chambers: *We Three* (1958, Prestige/New Jazz -07) Bop piano trio with a nice, evenly balanced feel, with drummer Haynes and bassist Chambers holding their own despite the fact that Newborn was one of the slickest, most voluble young pianists working then; presumably Haynes got top billing as the oldest; fifty years of steady work eventually made him the most famous. [7]

Roy Haynes Quartet: *Out of the Afternoon* (1962, Impulse -07) Cover photo puts the band out in the woods, the model for MOPDTK's new *Forty Fort*; drummer-led group is a study in contrasts, with Tommy Flanagan's erudite piano, Henry Grimes' arco bass, and Roland Kirk irresistibly rotating various sax-like instruments. [9]

Kevin Hays

Kevin Hays: *Andalucia* (1996, Blue Note -97) Nice piano trio with Ron Carter and Jack DeJohnette. [6]

David Hazeltine

David Hazeltine: *The Classic Trio* (1996, Sharp Nine) Very straight, very conventional, but in all respects just about the perfect mainstream piano trio session. Hazeltine is bright, sharp, always inventive. And Louis Hayes and especially Peter Washington are the perfect supporting cast -- indeed, it's hard to overpraise Washington: he's the Oscar Pettiford of our times, except better. The minus is less because of slight flaws than because perfect is terminal; progress comes from imperfections, but craftsmanship is worth celebrating too. [9]

Kees Hazevoet

Kees Hazevoet Quartet: *Pleasure* (1970, Atavistic -04) The ringer here in this group of Dutch unknowns is Louis Moholo, the famed South African drummer. Part of Atavistic's Unheard Music Series (original release run was 250 copies), editor Jon Corbett quotes Kees Hazevoet on the importance of choosing a good drummer. As it happened, Moholo was in town when Hazevoet had the studio booked, and he more than fit the bill. Hazevoet bangs on the piano, plays some interesting clarinet, and dabbles a bit on trumpet; Kris Wanders struggles with the alto sax, and Arjen Gorter rounds out the lineup on bass. This is ye olde European Free Jazz as we know and mostly can't stand it, but at its best it pricks your nerves and makes your hair stand on end, and the catharsis can feel sublime afterwards. [+]

Jimmy Heath

The Jimmy Heath Orchestra: *Really Big!* (1960, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -07) When Blue Note launched their RVG Editions they at least promised a sonic face lift by handing the reissues back to original sound engineer Rudy Van Gelder. The series was successful enough that Van Gelder cut a deal with Concord too. It's less obvious what the Keepnews Collection offers. Orrin Keepnews was producer and co-owner of a series of important labels: Riverside and Milestone in Concord's portfolio, Landmark in limbo. He's credited as producer here, but the 24-bit sound has been remastered by Joe Tarantino -- Keepnews' main contribution is to revisit his liner notes. Still, list price is the same as the previous Original Jazz Classics series, and occasional bonus tracks -- one here, an alternate take of "Nails" -- don't hurt. The choice of records within the Riverside and Milestone catalogs thus far seem completely arbitrary. Still, this one is an overlooked gem: a ten-piece band with Clark Terry, two Adderleys, three Heaths, and plenty of low-pitched horns to flesh out the acrobatics. [9]

Gerry Hemingway

Gerry Hemingway: *Electro-Acoustic Solo Works 1984-95* (1984-85, Random Acoustics -96)
Experimentation, scratchy noise, little blips and fades and whatnot. It's OK, but don't know what for. [5]

Gerry Hemingway Quintet: *Demon Chaser* (1993, Hat Art) One of a fairly notable series of quintet recordings Hemingway made in the early '90s, with a mostly Dutch-based group (Michael Moore, Wolter Wierbos, Ernest Reijseger; the other American was Mark Dresser). Loose and abstract and somewhat funny sounding -- I don't claim to get it at all well, but find it intriguing. Been reading a lot about Hemingway as I've tried to cover his recent albums. Seems like a fascinating guy, with a good head and an honest heart. I suspect he's worth returning to. [+]

Julius Hemphill

Julius Hemphill: *Dogon A.D.* (1972, Arista/Freedom -77) I've missed my chance to pick this up twice now: once in 1977 when Arista picked up the Freedom catalog and I managed to snag most of their reissues, and again last year when International Phonograph decided to make their reissue one of those limited editions that is already an out-of-print collector item -- judging from year-end polls I seem to be about the only jazz critic in the US not served with a copy, and I'm only hearing this now thanks to a reader. This was Hemphill's first album, with Baikida Carroll on trumpet, Abdul Wadud on cello, and Philip Wilson on drums. The alto sax leads a weird dance which breaks free even when the rhythm holds tight -- Wilson is especially impressive. Then they do it again with the leader on flute, even bluesier. The 2011 reissue adds a 20:07 bonus cut, "The Hard Blues," cut at the same session with baritone saxman Hamiet Bluiett added, also available on Hemphill's second album, *Coon Bid'ness*. [9]

Julius Hemphill: *Coon Bid'ness* (1972-75, Freedom) Early Hemphill, from two dates, both with Abdul Wadud on cello, both with extra horns including Hamiet Bluiett. The later work, which opens, strikes me as more tentative, but the long (20:08) take of "The Hard Blues," with Baikida Carroll (trumpet), is a good example of how magical Hemphill can be -- both risky and tightly together. [+]

Julius Hemphill/Peter Kowald: *Live at Kassiopeia* (1987, NoBusiness -2CD -11) New old music from two dead guys, likely to be missed if you have any idea who they are, and all the more poignant for being so intimate. Kowald is *the* German bassist of the 20th century, always intriguing, not least solo -- his solo *Was Da Ist* is a Penguin Guide crown album. Hemphill was an alto saxophonist, best known for his harmonic explorations with the World Saxophone Quartet and *Five Chord Stud*, which left him underappreciated as a solo player. First disc here is all solo: three 6-8 minute ones by Hemphill, a 32:20 by Kowald. They feel like studies, something slightly above practice, nice examples of each one's art. Second disc brings them together in three duos, where they start out distinct and gradually merge. I'm sentimental enough to be tempted to rate this higher, but Hemphill plays a lot of soprano sax here, I haven't compared this to such similar fare as his duo *Live in New York* with cellist Abdul K. Wadud, and I'm unlikely to return to the solos -- although Kowald's is probably a better intro than the daunting *Was Das Ist*. [8]

Julius Hemphill Big Band (1988, Nonesuch) A rigorous avant-garde alto saxophonist, best known as founder of World Saxophone Quartet, run as a lab in harmonics; somehow got a major label to give him a stab at a big band, and came up with a typically cantankerous mix of stuff that coheres elegantly and

drives you to the edge; for me, the power cut backs K. Curtis Lyle's spoken word rant. [7]

Joe Henderson

Joe Henderson: *Inner Urge* (1964, Blue Note) Not quite as great as Rollins or Coltrane, but in a quartet with Sonny's bassist and Trane's pianist and drummer he shows you how close he can get. [9]

Joe Henderson: *In 'n Out* (1964, Blue Note) Adding Kenny Dorham is a mixed blessing -- Henderson has always been very responsive to other horn players, but it means his sax is less central, as does the fact that McCoy Tyner is on such a roll. [+]

Wayne Henderson

The Freedom Sounds Featuring Wayne Henderson: *People Get Ready* (1967, Collectables -00) Trombone-led heavy funk. It's loud, with a ringing from virtually nonstop trombone, the dissonance more due to the recording quality than any other factor. Feels dated, but so precisely of its time that its very genericness is its distinction. Interesting shit. [+]

Peter Herborn

Peter Herborn's *Acute Insights* (1987-88, Winter & Winter -02) An octet, not quite a big band, but close enough for most practical purposes. Herborn is a trombonist, although my notes (probably cribbed from the Penguin Guide) lists him first and foremost as arranger and conductor. Most of the eight musicians switch between several instruments, giving Herborn a broad palette to work with. A bright and clever album, with a lot of action and dynamics, a nimble feel. [9]

Woody Herman

Woody Herman: *The Jazz Swinger/Music for Tired Lovers* (1954-66, Collectables -00) The first half a big band from 1966, produced by Teo Macero, with a cast that I barely recognize. Vocals not attributed, but certainly by Herman, who has always been a pretty good crooner. Bright, ebullient old-timey music, "Swanee" and "Dinah" and "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" and "Toot, Toot, Tootsie! (Goodbye)" -- more corn than is good for you, but tasty nonetheless. The second half is from 1954, just Herman singing in front of a piano trio that includes Errol Garner, a far cry from his usual bombast. Highlight is Ellington's "Beginning to See the Light"; Herman sings fine, and every now and then Garner does something to perk up your ears. [+]

Woody Herman: *Jazz Hoot/Woody's Winners* (1965-67, Collectables -01) A twofer: the latter improbably sported a crown in early editions of *The Penguin Guide*, the former close kin. The problem with Herman has always been that nobody (not Kenton, not even those Basie tomes with atom bombs on the cover) could pour it on so thick, but his most enervating music somehow manages to make a virtue of excess. *Live Featuring Bill Harris Vol. 1*, for example; most of this bowls over all resistance. [9]

Conrad Herwig

Conrad Herwig/Richie Beirach/Jack DeJohnette: *The Tip of the Sword* (1994, RadJazz -12):

Trombone-piano-drums trio, a combo that leans avant even though none of the principals are known for that; keeps the trombone front and center, a good taste of the leader before he got caught up in clave.

[7]

Frank Hewitt

Frank Hewitt Quintet: *Four Hundred Saturdays* (1999, Smalls -05) After missing every opportunity to record during his 66-year life, this is the third posthumous release for Hewitt, the everyday pianist at New York's legendary Smalls after hours club. This one is a live set, with his trio augmented by saxophonists Chris Byars and Mike Mullins. Fine latterday bebop, long solos on four old standbys, plenty of atmosphere. [8]

John Hicks

John Hicks Quartet: *Naima's Love Song* (1988, DIW) Featuring Bobby Watson, the brilliant alto saxophonist who sets the tone for these six pieces, but Hicks plays exceptionally well as well. [9]

John Hicks: *Lover Man: A Tribute to Billie Holiday* (1993, Red Baron) In contrast to James Carter's extravagant take on Holiday, this is pure simplicity: no horns, no strings, no wanting singers, just a superb piano trio, with Hicks, Ray Drummond (bass), and Victor Lewis (drums). Three Holiday credits here, including "God Bless the Child"; five other songs your mind's ear can hear her singing. Nothing outré here; they settle for the beautiful, which is quite good enough. [9]

Andrew Hill

Andrew Hill: *Black Fire* (1963, Blue Note) An auspicious debut album by a major pianist, progressive but not far out of mainstream, a quartet with superb piano and Joe Henderson in fine form. [9]

Andrew Hill: *Smoke Stack* (1963, Blue Note -06) Not quite a piano trio, in that he uses two bassists, frequently playing arco, but a good example of how far he could push his piano, especially as he surfs over such volatile time shifts. [9]

Andrew Hill: *Andrew!!!* (1964, Blue Note -05) Bobby Hutcherson!! John Gilmore! That's roughly the pecking order here, with Richard Davis and Joe Chambers rounding out the quintet. Blue Note founder Alfred Lion recognized in Hill a successor to Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols and recorded him extensively from 1963-70, but the records were erratically released -- this one didn't appear until 1968, many of the later sessions have only appeared recently, and many more are still out of print. After 1970, Hill mostly recorded obscure solo and trio sessions for European labels before returning to the limelight with larger groups since 1999's *Dusk* (Palmetto). This quintet fits somewhere between his small and large group moves: Hutcherson's vibes reinforce the angularity of Hill's piano, while Gilmore's single horn riffs along, again leaving the piano central. These dynamics make this an exceptional record for focusing on Hill's art. [9]

Andrew Hill: *Judgment!* (1964, Blue Note -05) Quartet with Bobby Hutcherson's vibes shadowing the pianist, similar to *Andrew!!!*, but without the complementary horn the focus on Hill is if anything

sharper. [+]

Andrew Hill: *Pax* (1965, Blue Note -06) Unreleased until 1975, this is as bright and fearless as you'd expect in a quintet fronted by Joe Henderson and Freddie Hubbard, but it Hill's piano is uncommonly shifty, and he spreads the horns further out than they'd normally go; some technical problems may explain the delay, but for sheer risk into music this is a high point of Blue Note's avant-garde. [9]

Andrew Hill: *Compulsion* (1965, Blue Note -078) Despite the horn firepower -- Sun Ra's John Gilmore smoldering on tenor sax and bass clarinet, Freddie Hubbard firing away on trumpet -- Hill's piano has rarely loomed larger or more critically. He stamps out dense chords and skitters off with abstract fills, his rhythmic eccentricity prodding Cecil McBee and/or Richard Davis on bass, Joe Chambers on drums, with an extra layer of Afro-exotica from Nadi Qamar and Renaud Simmons. [9]

Andrew Hill: *Change* (1966, Blue Note -07): The fine print notes that this, minus two alternate takes, was originally issued under Sam Rivers' name as half of the 1976 2-LP *Involution*. That it should now revert to Hill's catalogue reflects the changing fortunes of the principals. Hill was a pet project of Francis Wolf in the '60s, but much recorded then went unreleased at the time, including this quartet with Rivers. From the late '90s, Hill mounted quite a comeback, with two much admired albums on Palmetto and a return to Blue Note, *Time Lines*, which swept most jazz critic polls in 2006. I'm not a huge fan of the late albums, but they've led to a massive reissue of Hill's 1963-69 Blue Note period, which has if anything grown in stature. Rivers' career actually parallels Hill's quite nicely, with Blue Note in the '60s, a long stretch in the wilderness, and a comeback in 1999, with two large ensemble albums, *Inspiration* and *Culmination*, released on RCA. Hill died in 2007, but Rivers carries on in his 80s, with an exemplary trio album, *Violet Violets* (Stunt) in 2004. Still, it is appropriate to restore this session to Hill's ledger: he wrote all of the pieces, and once you get past the ugliness of an 11:04 opener called "Violence" the sax calms down and the piano emerges, as impressive as ever. [9]

Andrew Hill: *Dance With Death* (1968, Blue Note -04) Unreleased until 1980, soon out of print, this is a fitting successor to Hill's early Blue Notes, with an underrated and fascinating front line, Charles Tolliver and Joe Farrell. [9]

Andrew Hill: *Passing Ships* (1969, Blue Note -03) Previously unreleased, rescued from the vaults, a nonet with riveting arrangements for two ace trumpets and the omnipresent Joe Farrell; I like it better than Hill's recent much-praised big band work, probably because it features a lot more of Hill's piano. [9]

Andrew Hill: *Mosaic Select* (1967-70 Mosaic -3CD -05) One of the most important pianists to emerge in the '60s, Hill recorded extensively for Blue Note from 1963 to 1970, but as the label declined he increasingly found his recordings stuck on the shelf. After many years of quietly recording on European labels, Hill re-emerged with *Dusk* (2000, Palmetto) gaining accolades for his arrangements. Blue Note soon came out with the previously unreleased *Passing Ships*, which in its intricate arrangements for a six piece band was the perfect bookend opposite *Dusk*. This box answers the question of what else by Hill is in Blue Note's basement. It leads off with a 1970 sextet session featuring Charles Tolliver in brilliant form and closes with a 1967 sextet with Sam Rivers in chronic breakdown. In between are a basic trio session from 1967 and an intriguing strings session from 1969. [7]

Buck Hill

Buck Hill: *I'm Beginning to See the Light* (1991, Muse) A tenor saxophonist from Washington, DC, Hill had played with Charlie Byrd and Shirley Scott in the '50s, but was past 50 before he got his own to record the first one under his own name. He cut several for Steeplechase, then four for Muse. This one was produced by Houston Person, who is a similar player. Some radiant piano here by Jon Ozment. A lot of fine, mellow, perfectly mainstream saxophone. [+]

Earl Hines

Earl Hines/Cozy Cole: *Earl's Backroom and Cozy's Caravan* (1958, Felsted) One side is a quartet led by the piano great with Curtis Lowe on tenor and baritone sax; the other is a septet led by drummer Cozy Cole with no one I've heard of on tenor sax, trumpet, trombone, piano, guitar, or bass; one way the leaders prove their stature is how your ears move from the piano to the drums on the transition, but Cole loses his edge when he sit back for a blues vocal, and no one picks up the slack. [6]

Earl Hines: *Once Upon a Time* (1966, Impulse -03) A royal affair, the Earl takes Duke's band out for a spin, grinning like a kid at the wheel of a shiny new Cadillac; Johnny Hodges plays pretty, and Cat Anderson does handstands on trumpet. [9]

Art Hodes

Art Hodes: *I Remember Bessie* (1976, Delmark -13) Pianist, b. 1904 in Russia, not sure when he moved to Chicago but he didn't start recording until he moved to New York in 1938. Smith died in 1937, so they could have crossed paths in Chicago, but most likely he remembered her from records. Solo piano, old blues with some swing to them, the style Hodes grew up on and was exceptional at. [8]

Johnny Hodges

Johnny Hodges: *The Jeep Is Jumpin'* (1937-52, Proper -4CD -03) Hodges was the crown jewel in Duke Ellington's band. He had such beautiful tone and stately grace that when Benny Carter was asked what he had gleaned from Hodges, his answer was that he had learned never to play Hodges' songs. I remember a film clip of Ellington dashing off a new piece of music and handing it off to Hodges; as Hodges puzzled his way through it, the view cut back to Ellington, who couldn't have been prouder when his children were born. Still, Hodges always felt unappreciated (or at least underpaid), and longed to lead his own orchestra -- which he did for a few years in the early '50s, not coincidentally the least momentous stretch in Ellington's discography. But as early as 1937, Hodges led various small spinoffs, often with Ellington on piano. This box restricts itself to sessions under Hodges' name, and just inches into Hodges' breakaway Verve sessions -- which sound as Ellingtonian as ever. But then what would Ellington have sounded like without Hodges? [10]

Johnny Hodges: *Blues-A-Plenty* (1958, Verve -11) A download-only release, the latest gambit in reducing back catalogue to pure profit. Hodges was Duke Ellington's prize alto saxophonist from 1927 until his death in 1970, except for a few years in the 1950s when he wandered off, feeling underappreciated, or more specifically underpaid. But he never wandered far, and his personal albums are the crown gems of small group Ellingtonia. Here, for instance, his rhythm section includes Billy

Strayhorn and Sam Woodyard, and they do "Satin Doll" as gorgeously as it's ever been done. And when Hodges wants a little more horn power, he taps his peers: Roy Eldridge (trumpet), Vic Dickenson (trombone), and Ben Webster (tenor sax). Aside from a Japanese release, the last time this appeared on CD was when Verve slipped this and a Sweets Edison album into the 2-CD *The Soul of Ben Webster*. Fabulous combination, but Hodges, as ever, was the sweet spot. I'd grade this higher if it were real. [9]

Johnny Hodges: *Everybody Knows Johnny Hodges* (1964-65, Impulse -92) Ellington's star, the very model of what alto sax should sound like, with his usual bandmates in a reprise of the small group spinoffs he led in the '40s. [10]

Billie Holiday

Billie Crystal Remembers Billie Holiday (1939-50, Verve -05) Crystal predictably picks from the Commodore and Decca recordings his uncle produced -- not her best-known work, not least because Gabler never gave her the all-star bands that Teddy Wilson (early) and Norman Granz (later) came up with; but if the point is just to hear her sing she has rarely been more gripping, especially on the strings-backed "God Bless the Child." [9]

Billie Holiday: *Lady Sings the Blues* (1955-56, Verve -07) Two late period sessions, some people find her broken down sound poignant, but I find it awkward, especially when she searches for an affect she used to find naturally; on the other hand, Verve's groups were stellar, and she held some sort of patent on magic. [6]

Billie Holiday + Lester Young: *A Musical Romance* (1937-57, Columbia/Legacy -02) They were joined forever by a pair of nicknames -- Lester, who had his own argot for everything, called her Lady Day, and Billie anointed him as Prez -- but their romance was never palpable. For one thing, she was so self-destructive; for another, he was so vulnerable. But while they were two unwinding tragedies, their encounters in the studio were magical. The standard image of Lester is the one where his saxophone seems to be floating off into space, like his music is transporting him to a zone of zero gravity. Lester's levity lifts everyone, but especially Billie, who has never sounded sweeter. [10]

Dave Holland

David Holland/Barre Phillips: *Music From Two Basses* (1971, ECM -05) Just what the title says, with two of the great masters of the postbop era plucking and plying a versatile but difficult instrument. [7]

Dave Holland Quartet: *Dream of the Elders* (1995, ECM -96) In the generation of bassists between Mingus and Parker, the only one who rivals Holland is Charlie Haden. Both have been famous names for a long while, their names often appearing above the line in duos and trios. In the '90s both started to move more firmly as group leaders: Haden with his Quartet West, and Holland with this Quartet and his later Quintet. Having started in the avant-garde, both moved slightly retro in doing so: Haden toward west coast cool, Holland into a postbop variant that could be called euro-cool. Overall this album feels transitional (especially now that we know that better ones came later), but the lead cut ("The Winding Way") is powerfully suggestive -- a sinuous melody, a prominent bass groove, effective solos from Steve Nelson (vibes, marimba) and Eric Person (soprano sax here; he also plays alto). The band plays with delicate and judicious interaction, but the ideas do sort of thin out. The closer,

"Equality," is particularly lovely; the first half closes with the same song, with Cassandra Wilson singing a lyric from a Maya Angelou poem, an effective and tasteful statement. [+]

Dave Holland: *Rarum X: Selected Recordings* (1972-2000, ECM -04) Interesting that his own groups feature higher pitched horns (usually alto or soprano sax; one cut here even has Sam Rivers on flute) to contrast better with his bass, on which he's one of the all-time greats. [+]

Tristan Honsinger

Tristan Honsinger Quintet: *Map of Moods* (1994, FMP -96) Near string quartet (two violins, bass, and Honsinger's cello) plus drums (Louis Moholo). Four pieces, defined as Areas 1-4 of the Map of Moods. Scratchy. [5]

Elmo Hope

Elmo Hope: *Trio and Quintet* (1953-57, Blue Note -05) Two 10-inch LPs -- one a trio, the other a quintet with Freeman Lee on trumpet and Frank Foster on tenor sax -- plus three tracks from a later quintet with Stu Williamson and Harold Land; Hope was a fine bebop pianist, best heard on the sparkling trios, but interesting throughout, even when he takes a back seat to Foster's swinging leads. [8]

Shirley Horn

Shirley Horn: *You Won't Forget Me* (1990, Verve): A striking jazz singer, especially on the slow standards that predominate here, she started in the 1960s, but got a restart when she signed to Verve in 1987; her trio -- she plays piano, expertly enough to show up on other singers' albums -- gets the occasional guest star addition here, including Miles Davis and Wynton Marsalis. [7]

Shirley Horn: *Live at the 1994 Monterey Jazz Festival* (1994, MJF -08) Very cost-effective: a singer with such voice and poise a piano trio suits her best, plus she plays a pretty mean piano; just turned 60, at the peak of her fame coming off a series of well-regarded albums on Verve, she nails her whole range here -- "The Look of Love," "A Song for You," "I've Got the World on a String," "Hard Hearted Hannah." [+]

Lena Horne

Lena Horne: *Sings: The M-G-M Singles* (1946-48, Verve/Hip-O Select -10) The first black actress granted a Hollywood contract, she was gorgeous in ways that transcended race -- her ancestors reportedly included slaveholders like John C. Calhoun as well as slaves, with a little American Indian mixed in along the way -- and a pretty good standards singer. Her "Stormy Weather" was a hit in 1943, the title of an MGM musical, and not included here although it seems like it should fit. This picks up a bit later. The house orchestra is completely ordinary, and more than half of the songs you no doubt know from Billie Holiday and/or Ella Fitzgerald. Horne wasn't in their class, but the best songs here -- "A Foggy Day (in London Town)" and "The Lady Is a Tramp" are two -- are completely satisfying. [8]

Wayne Horvitz

Wayne Horvitz and Zony Mash: *Brand Spankin' New* (1998, Knitting Factory) Horvitz plays organ (Hammond B3), various synths and electric piano. He's joined by Timothy Young (guitar), Fred Chalenor (bass), and Andy Roth (drums), for what is basically a shorthand funk outing. [+]

Joe Houston

Joe Houston: *Blows Crazy!* (1951-63, Ace -00) Jump blues, nothing fancy, just a lot of blowing. Not that Houston didn't try to follow the trends -- later on he specializes in twist songs, and closes on a limbo. Kind of redundant if you already have the Specialty set. [+]

Noah Howard

Noah Howard Quartet (1966, ESP-Disk -93) Short (29:35) debut album for the New Orleans-bred alto saxophonist, with Ric Colbeck on trumpet and bass-drums players I've never run into again; Colbeck, who had one album and two more side-credits by 1970, jousts gamely with Howard; note that Rhapsody has this album listed under its last song title, "And About Love." [6]

The Noah Howard Quartet: *Schizophrenic Blues* (1977, FMP -78) Alto saxophonist from New Orleans, may be why he never lost his party sense even while testing the limits of ESP-Disk's "only the artist decides" rule; rools the upper registers with Itaru Oki's trumpet never far behind, and sounds like he's been listening to then-recent Ornette Coleman. [9]

Noah Howard Group: *Berlin Concert* (1975, FMP -77) Group includes a pianist I've never heard of (Takashi Kako), bass, drums, and percussion; don't have the song credits, but "Olé" would be Coltrane's, and the alto saxophonist shows more inclination to take the Trane than anything else; toward the end he dominates the album and it just lifts up and sails away. [8]

Norman Howard

Norman Howard & Joe Phillips: *Burn Baby Burn* (1968, ESP-Disk -07) Vault music from the 1960s avant-garde, a session led by two minor associates of Albert Ayler, an austere affair where Howard's trumpet and Phillips' alto sax part the waters for a revelation that never quite comes; an enigmatic record, all the more so because the lengthy booklet raises more questions than it answers. [7]

Michael Howell

Michael Howell: *Looking Glass* (1973, Milestone) Guitarist, cut a couple albums in the 1970s and not much else till I ran across him in a sideman role; thought he has poise and taste, already evident here both in the horn-studded grooves and in his more intimate moments trading thoughtful lines with pianist Hampton Hawes. [7]

Freddie Hubbard

Trumpeter, emerged fully formed in 1960 as a top-notch hard bop player who could play anywhere, even avant-garde slots. He mostly headlined on Blue Note, but for a five-year stretch he showed up

everywhere, and was rarely less than stellar.

Freddie Hubbard: *Open Sesame* (1960, Blue Note) A bit soft for hard bop, but it has much of the sheen and flow of those Herbie Hancock records where Hubbard subbed for Miles. This one loses nothing in subbing McCoy Tyner for Hancock, and gains a lot with Tina Brooks. [9]

Freddie Hubbard: *Ready for Freddie* (1961, Blue Note -04) Hubbard burst onto the scene in 1960, and over the next couple of years he ripped off a series of breathtaking albums for Blue Note. He fit very smoothly into the Miles Davis orbit, but he also played superbly in more avant contexts, working with Eric Dolphy, John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman, and would later work with Andrew Hill and Bobby Hutcherson. This one has long been out of print, but it's a superb showcase and quite a group: Wayne Shorter, McCoy Tyner, Art Davis, Elvin Jones, and Bernard McKinney (euphonium, a tuba tuned more like a trombone). [9]

Freddie Hubbard: *Here to Stay* (1962, Blue Note -06) The younger generation of hard boppers hard at work, with Wayne Shorter, Cedar Walton and Reggie Workman, with Philly Joe Jones the only over-30, offering a sleekly modern take, even of standard fare like "Body and Soul"; cut between Impulse albums at a time when it seemed he could do no wrong, this sat on the shelf until 1976. [8]

Freddie Hubbard: *The Artistry of Freddie Hubbard* (1962, Impulse) This couldn't have taken long to arrange: six young hard bop stars -- John Gilmore the most interesting choice -- stretching out on two standards and three briefer Hubbard tunes. "Caravan" is crackling, but "Summertime" gets lost and drags a bit. [6]

Freddie Hubbard: *The Body and the Soul* (1963, Impulse) I suppose Bob Thiele's idea here was to feature Hubbard in a swishy orchestral setting like Gil Evans concocted for Miles Davis, but Wayne Shorter's charts are a wet blanket for everyone. The three (of nine) cuts where Shorter just plays are sharper but still prone to clutter, although occasionally you get a glimpse of how much talent is wasted here (e.g., Eric Dolphy and Cedar Walton). [3]

Freddie Hubbard: *Breaking Point* (1964, Blue Note -04) The liner notes posit this as the launching point for Hubbard's career -- the first time he recorded with his own touring group. That must mean that the half-dozen or so previous albums that he recorded for Blue Note, as well as three for Impulse, were just studio groups; conversely, that explains his no-name rhythm section. This is a mixed bag of pieces. The title cut is a strange mix of stops and lurches, at times dazzling and at other times puzzling. The next three are more conventional, "Blue Frenzy" especially pleasing. Joe Chambers' "Mirrors" is slow, opaque, rather hazy. James Spaulding complements, including a flute solo. But most of the interest comes from Hubbard, who plays superbly. [+]

Freddie Hubbard: *Blue Spirits* (1965, Blue Note -04) The best of his later Blue Notes, even though the album proper is split between two somewhat different groups: "Soul Surge" is a groove piece driven by Big Black's congas and Harold Mabern's gospel-tinged piano, a strong mover by any measure; "Blue Spirits" is lighter and slicker, with McCoy Tyner, Bob Cranshaw and Pete LaRoca in the rhythm section, and one of James Spaulding's best flute solos ever. The contrast between Mabern and Tyner is clearer than the one between Joe Henderson and Hank Mobley -- if it had been planned one might have switched them. Two bonus cuts bring in a Herbie Hancock/Reggie Workman/Elvin Jones rhythm section, including the relatively abstract "True Colors," a slippery excursion outside. That these all fit together just reminds you that Hubbard could do it all. [9]

Freddie Hubbard: *The Night of the Cookers* (1965, Blue Note -2CD -04) Recorded live at Club la Marchal in Brooklyn on Apr. 9-10, 1965, the treat here is in hearing Hubbard square off with Lee Morgan, an equally brilliant and even more fiery second trumpet. Each disc has two long pieces, and they develop as long pieces do, with lots of trade-offs. The rhythm section includes Harold Mabern on piano, and is supplemented by Big Black on congas -- a nice touch. The fireworks are present, but hardly as spectacular as hoped, which leaves us with not much more than the usual jam session. [5]

Freddie Hubbard: *Without a Song: Live in Europe 1969* (1969, Blue Note -09) Few jazz men made a bigger splash when they first broke in than Hubbard. From 1960 through 1965 he seemed to be everywhere, straddling hard bop and the avant-garde, filling in Miles Davis slots and adding a little extra splash, dropping a series of good-to-very-good records under his own name. He made his mark with chops and flexibility, and declined rather quickly after that, first losing opportunities, then losing his touch. In 1969 he was still a force, with a couple of good fusion-oriented albums still ahead of him -- *Red Clay* and *Straight Life* in 1970. He died in 2008 after a belated and unspectacular comeback shot, pushed largely by David Weiss, who helped assemble this set from three concerts in England and Germany. Seems fairly typical of his repertoire, but his "A Night in Tunisia" doesn't eclipse Gillespie's, and the other standards are unexceptional. But he does break through with expansive solos on the two originals at the end, "Space Talk" and "Hub-Tones." And Roland Hanna's fans will find his fills of interest. [7]

Freddie Hubbard: *Red Clay* (1970, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -10) Half-hearted as a fusion move -- Herbie Hancock plays electric piano like an acoustic but the loss of resonance scarcely matters at this pace -- but the trumpeter blasts away like hard bop at its most hearty, and as if that weren't enough Joe Henderson is champing at the bit, always eager to muscle his way in. [9]

Freddie Hubbard: *Straight Life* (1970, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) Title cut picks up where *Red Clay* left off with a 17:27 romp where Joe Henderson's tenor sax adds muscle to Hubbard's brass and Herbie Hancock and George Benson keep a groove roiling; tails off a bit after that, and gives up after the original LP's 36:10 with no bonus tracks. [8]

Freddie Hubbard: *First Light* (1971, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) What made Hubbard the hottest trumpet anywhere in the early 1960s was his versatility: hard bop, avant-garde, when Herbie Hancock wanted to cut his own Miles Davis Quintet album Hubbard not only filled the bill, he offered a step up; so no surprise that he is brilliant here, it what is otherwise a ridiculous set up, with Don Sebesky's strings and winds toadying in the background to songs as absurd as "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey"; two bonus cuts, one a live take with a small group. [6]

Freddie Hubbard/Ilan Mimaroglu: *Sing Me a Song of Songmy* (1971, Atlantic) More the latter's album, although in a long career of making politically charged avant-electronic music this was his only album that got released on a major label; the electronics are nifty, but the strings get messy and the vocal pastiches don't hit their intended targets as squarely as agitprop should; trumpet/flugelhorn is superb, natch, and there's a sharp jazz combo in there somewhere -- Junior Cook (tenor sax), Kenny Barron (piano), Art Booth (bass), Louis Hayes (drums). [6]

Freddie Hubbard: *Pinnacle: Live & Unreleased From the Keystone Korner* (1980, Resonance -11) The trumpet great's real career pinnacle was during his 1960-66 Blue Notes, but he worked steadily into the late 1990s, and could always drop a blistering hard bop set like this one -- the extra horns just push him on; cautious here because Rhapsody only delivers 4 of 7 cuts. [6]

The Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw Sessions (1985-87, Blue Note -2CD) At this date, slower than you'd expect from Woody, and faster than you'd expect from Freddie. [5]

Helen Humes

Helen Humes: *Sneakin' Around [The Definitive Black & Blue Sessions]* (1974, Black & Blue -02) Count Basie's girl singer -- picked up the job when Billie Holiday left -- basically a blues shouter with a smooth, even-tempered delivery, singing songs she likes, cut cheap in France with Gerard Badini unstable on tenor sax, filled out with extra takes. [7]

Bobby Hutcherson

Bobby Hutcherson: *Happenings* (1966, Blue Note -06) A quartet matching the leader's vibes with Herbie Hancock's piano, the latter taking the lead on a pair of lovely slow pieces, while the vibes run off with the fast ones; Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" gets an especially sensitive reading. [9]

Bobby Hutcherson: *Oblique* (1967, Blue Note -05) This may be the best case I've heard for Hutcherson's preeminence as the modern vibes player, in part because here he carries most of the load himself, as opposed to *Dialogue* where he shares space with two horns (Freddie Hubbard and Sam Rivers) and Andrew Hill's imposing piano. [9]

Bobby Hutcherson: *Head On* (1971, Blue Note -09) An album from Blue Note's dog days, the great vibraphonist working with classical pianist Todd Cochran on suite things with a large band; the reissue adds 40 minutes of extras that blow away the original album, including the exciting 15:40 fusion romp "Togo Land" and some serious bebop soloing from Harold Land. [7]

Bobby Hutcherson: *Now!* (1978, Blue Note -04) The earlier pieces have lyrics and vocals by Gene McDaniels plus backing chorus, a silly mix of hipster crooning and black power, only intermittently relieved by Harold Land's tenor sax; the later pieces revive the earlier ones with no vocals but the supremely unswinging L.A. Philharmonic; buried deep are patches of brilliant vibes play and some fascinating rhythm. [4]

Bobby Hutcherson: *Mirage* (1991, Landmark) Vibes, piano (Tommy Flanagan), bass (Peter Washington), drums (Billy Drummond), a book of old songs (including two by Hutcherson, one by Flanagan). This is polite and pretty, but not all that interesting. The best vibes-piano examples I can think of are cases where the vibes accents the idiosyncrasies of the pianist (think Milt Jackson with Thelonious Monk) or where they push each other to the brink (think Joe Locke with Kenny Barron). Flanagan isn't that kind of pianist, especially with bass and drums to fall back on. Hutcherson's duo album with McCoy Tyner, *Manhattan Moods* (1993), is closer to the mark. [5]

Susie Ibarra

Susie Ibarra/Assif Tsahar: *Home Cookin'* (1998, Hopscotch) Normally she plays drums, and he plays tenor saxophone. Here they switch off at places, particularly on the eight short Dream Songs -- she goes to thumb piano, he to violin; she balafon, he talking drum; she djembe, he bass clarinet; she tympani, he flute; she toy gamelan, he bells; and so forth. Tsahar's saxophone works its way through fast, searching runs, like Coltrane via Daniel Carter -- which can make it unclear just how original they

are. One of the longer pieces, "At Dawn," has Tsahar playing softly as Ibarra adds bells. Pay close attention and this gets interesting; otherwise it doesn't do much for background. But both in spirit and in its neighborly proximity, this is very much an album of the Parker orbit. [+]

Susie Ibarra Trio: *Radiance* (1999, Hopscotch) With Charles Burnham (the violinist who succeeded Billy Bang in the String Trio of New York and lit up James Blood Ulmer's *Odyssey*) and Cooper-Moore (the pianist from William Parker's In Order to Survive quartet). Ibarra was the drummer during David S. Ware's peak period: not that the other three drummers were chopped liver, and not that Ware's later albums aren't easier to get into and more rewarding, but as drummers go she was the tops. The trio itself is a brilliant idea: the little heard Cooper-Moore is one of my favorite pianists, comparable I think to the late, brilliant Horace Tapscott. Ibarra's drum solos are thoughtful and dynamic. The compositions do diddle a bit, and Burnham carries most of the melodic weight, but he also gives the whole proceedings a slightly acidic tone. [9]

Abdullah Ibrahim

Abdullah Ibrahim: *Banyana: The Children of Africa* (1976, Enja) Piano trio with Cecil McBee (bass) and Roy Brooks (drums), although Ibrahim chants and plays soprano sax on "Ishmael" -- at 15:09 the long piece here (runner up a second bonus take of the same piece, also with chant and saxophone). His saxophone is used for slow, moody pieces, haunting but not especially interesting. The middle pieces are more interesting, where he knuckles down with dense chord clusters while McBee provides solid support. This doesn't strike me as one of his better records, but he is a major talent and always has something to add. [5]

Abdullah Ibrahim: *Voice of Africa* (1976, Kaz) When this series of '70s recordings were released on four CDs in 1988, I figured two would suffice, and picked *Tintinyana* and *Blues for a Hip King*. The other two have since been hard to find, so stumbling on this one was a coup. Especially since it is if anything even better than my random choices. Ibrahim's South African jive has been a theme oft repeated throughout his career, but here it is amplified by his most sympathetic colleague, saxophonist/flautist Basil Coetzee. Nonstop wonderful. [10]

Ethan Iverson

The Ethan Iverson Trio: *The Minor Passions* (1999, Fresh Sound New Talent) With Reid Anderson (bass) and Billy Hart (drums), making this two-thirds of the Bad Plus. Some extraordinary work here -- I love the rolling rhythms that seem to gain velocity, and find their "Where or When" exceptionally beautiful. Best piano trio I've heard in a while. [9]

Bobby Jackson

Bobby Jackson: *The Café Extra-Ordinaire Story* (1970, Jazzman -10) Number seven in the label's "Holy Grail" series of "the rarest of the rare" funk/jazz LPs, a series that started with Uncle Funkenstein's 1983 *Together Again*. Jackson founded a Minneapolis jazz dive and played bass, caught here with a few locals playing music that aspired to funk but mostly just swung -- "Bobby's Blues" (by pianist Bobby Lyle) and "Paul's Ark" (by pianist Paul Akre and tenor saxophonist Morris Wilson) are typical titles. [7]

D.D. Jackson

D.D. Jackson: *Rhythm Dance* (1996, Justin Time) Piano trio. Jackson is one of the few pianists who has made a serious study of Don Pullen, and most of this is very reminiscent of Pullen -- above all the explosive arpeggios, a crashing of knuckles to keyboard that nobody else tried let alone made music with. Not all of this is in that vein, but enough to get your attention, and the sweeter stuff is just icing. [9]

D.D. Jackson: *So Far* (1999, RCA Victor) Solo piano. Most of the pieces are dedications (Michel Camilo, Ornette Coleman, Claude Debussy, Vladimir Horowitz, John Hicks, Jaki Byard, Don Pullen, Bud Powell), a couple covers (Ellington, Monk, Mingus), nine luscious minutes of "Suite New York," and a couple of other pieces, including the Pullen-esque "Sweet Beginnings." The kid can play, but I'm less sure that I can follow what he's up to. [5]

Milt Jackson

The preeminent vibraphone player of the early bebop world, notably working with pianists Thelonious Monk and John Lewis (Modern Jazz Quartet); prolific, adaptable to all styles, an attentive partner with an irrepressible sense of swing.

Milt Jackson/Wes Montgomery: *Bags Meets Wes!* (1961, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) Montgomery's guitar, and Wynton Kelly's piano, tend to lurk in the background, filling in softly while Jackson works his usual vibes magic, swinging, accenting, floating off into space. [7]

Milt Jackson: *Statements* (1962, Impulse) A quartet set matching him with Hank Jones on piano, Paul Chambers on bass, and MJQ's Connie Kay on drums. Jones, like Jackson from Detroit, is equally adept at drawing his partners out. [8]

Milt Jackson: *Jazz 'n' Samba* (1964, Impulse) First four cuts are straight jazz before pianist Tommy Flanagan bows out and guitarist Barry Galbraith and Howard Collins enter for Jobim's title cut. No extra percussion, but Jackson manages to approximate, and the two vocals by Lilian Clark are charming. [6]

Milt Jackson: *At the Museum of Modern Art* (1965, Verve -08) A live set with Cedar Walton on fleet bebop piano and James Moody floating by on flute; Jackson's vibes tie it all together, accenting the differences while retaining his trademark sense of swing. [6]

Milt Jackson: *Sunflower* (1972, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) The names on the front cover promise lively postbop around the vibes -- Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard, Ron Carter, Billy Cobham -- but the label promises a lot of Don Sebesky goup, sparing neither the strings nor the woodwinds; net result is a very easy listening trumpet album, the vibes neither cute nor schmaltzy. [5]

Willis Jackson

Willis Jackson/Von Freeman: *Lockin' Horns* (1978, 32 Jazz -00) Freeman has a rep for going his own way, but he's slumming here, adding a second tenor sax to Jackson's soul jazz group -- Carl Wilson on organ, guitarist Joe "Boogaloo" Jones, and drummer Yusef Ali; early going may just be Jackson, but when they do joust they kick up a storm. [6]

Illinois Jacquet

Illinois Jacquet: *Jumpin' at Apollo* (1945-47, Delmark -02) Jacquet was a giant who straddled the jazz mainstream and the r&b honkers who prefigured rock and roll: in effect, he was the missing link between '30s swing and '50s rock, a master of an increasingly unpopular instrument in a relentlessly popular medium. His '40s recordings have been inconsistently packaged and hard-to-find, but these three sessions are superb. [9]

Illinois Jacquet: *The Black Velvet Band* (1947-67, RCA Bluebird -88) All from 1947-49 except for a shot at "Flying Home" with Lionel Hampton's band at Newport in 1967. Jacquet had a thick tone and deep blues roots. He managed to straddle the bebop/honker divide in the late '40s, his penchant for blaring, honking blasts balanced by enough skill to maneuver through any tricky bebop moves. The main weakness here, as is usually the case with Jacquet's '40s recordings, is the presence of indifferent vocal tracks. But the high points are red hot. This has been long been out of print, and I only found it after a long search. A little disappointing. [+]

Illinois Jacquet & His Big Band: *Jacquet's Got It* (1987, Label M -01) Surprising but this seems to be the only item in Jacquet's discography for the '80s. The big band is pretty sharp, especially on the opening "Tickletoe," but acquits itself throughout. Jacquet's leads are less evident, but he picks up "You Left Me All Alone" and carries it from start to finish. Sounds like he held up pretty well. [+]

Ahmad Jamal

Pianist, started life in 1930 as Fritz in Pittsburgh, is a unique stylist but is hard to describe because there's nothing idiosyncratic about him -- he's the very model of a modern jazz pianist.

Ahmad Jamal: *The Legendary Okeh & Epic Recordings* (1951-55, Epic/Legacy -05) A treasure trove of early piano trios, with Ray Crawford's sweet guitar and Eddie Calhoun or Israel Crosby on bass; Jamal's exceptional commercial success was a tribute to his touch -- his sense of rhythm and use of space which let him freshen up familiar standards. [9]

Ahmad Jamal: *Poinciana Revisited* (1969, Impulse) Piano trio live at Top of the Village Gate in New York, returns to his most famous song -- recorded in 1955 and more famously in 1958 -- in a model program, even the closing Jobim/de Moraes tune fits in. [9]

Ahmad Jamal: *Freeflight* (1971, Impulse) Same trio two years later live at Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, closing with yet another take of "Poinciana." Starts with Jamal playing electric piano on McCoy Tyner's "Effendi" -- with the fade turned up the notes all but skip off the tape. Recovers somewhat. [6]

Bob James

Bob James Trio: *Explosions* (1965, ESP-Disk -08) An early avant-garde phase for the future smooth jazz pianist, with Robert Ashley and Gordon Mumma helping out on the electronic tape collage, and bassist Barre Phillips slapping, plucking, and sawing off tangents the piano may or may not wish to follow. [8]

Jon Jang

Jon Jang Sextet: *Two Flowers on a Stem* (1995, Soul Note) Jang's melodies are rooted in Chinese music, but the real oriental feel comes from Chen Jiebing's erhu -- a string instrument likened to a cello. The only other oriental instrument is the gong that bassist Santi Debriano uses. The rest of the group: Billy Hart (drums), James Newton (flute), David Murray (tenor sax, bass clarinet). The early sections here tend to favor newton, his flute providing an arch airiness. On rarely does the music here lapse into the stateliness I associate with Chinese music -- the bottom line is that Jang swings too much for that. The latter half is increasingly turned over to Murray, who rips off an astonishing solo on "Variation on a Sorrow Song of Mengjiang Nu." [+]

Guus Janssen

Guus Janssen and His Orchestra: *Dancing Series* (1988, Geestgronden) A big band led by the Dutch pianist, with many of the usual suspects on line. Which means it can achieve a comic, almost circus-like atmosphere, or it can break down into squalls of sound. The piece called "Jojo Jive" is a fine example of the former, shuffling along with occasional dissonance. [+]

Janssen Glerum Janssen: *Zwik* (1996-97, Geestgronden) That's Guus Janssen (piano), Ernst Glerum (double bass), Wim Janssen (drums). The first Janssen builds this mostly out of riddim fragments, which is what I like to hear. [9]

Joseph Jarman

Joseph Jarman: *As If It Were the Seasons* (1968, Delmark -07) The arty 23:47 title cut was done by a trio plus voice, the sort of thing that AACM could do when imagining great black classical music; but when the gang -- including Muhal Richard Abrams, Fred Anderson, and John Stubblefield -- showed up for the 20:58 "Song for Christopher" all hell broke loose; you already know whether you can stand this or not, but if you can, focus on the percussive thrash, credited to Everybody. [7]

Joseph Jarman/Famoudou Don Moye: *Egwu-Anwu (Sun Song)* (1978, Indian Navigation -2CD -97) Moye's percussion, sounding distinctly African, provides much of the interest here; Jarman's melodic themes, in an African mode as well, seem additive. Much of this is nice, and little if any is jarring; the African themes of some interest, but over the course of 83 minutes not an awful lot actually happens. [5]

Joseph Jarman/Marilyn Crispell: *Connecting Spirits* (1996, Music & Arts) Jarman was an AACM founder and saxophonist in the Art Ensemble of Chicago up to 1993 and again after 2003; don't have the credits here, but he's mostly on soprano, going for that high lonesome sound, but it's not all striving, as the blissful "Dear Lord" shows, not to mention the triumphant "Connectivity." [7]

Keith Jarrett

A tour de force in the early 1970s, bouncing between stellar quartets on both sides of the Atlantic, cranking out the best-selling solo piano album of all time.

Keith Jarrett: *El Juicio (The Judgment)/Life Between the Exit Signs* (1967-71, Collectables -99) This twofer omits one cut from *El Juicio* ("Pardon My Rags"). It also omits the original liner notes

(reproduced for the other album), and gives the original release date (Atlantic 1673) as 1975. The best discography I can find has the release date as 1972, and the recording dates as July 8-9 and 15-16, 1971. The album was recorded by Jarrett's US-based quartet -- Dewey Redman (tenor sax), Charlie Haden (bass), Paul Motian (drums). *Life Between the Exit Signs* was recorded in 1967 with a trio -- Haden and Motian -- and released in 1968. Both records are interesting: the first (latter) more experimental, more diverse (with Redman), and a conscious nod toward Ornette -- the 2:31 percussion only "Pre-Judgment Atmosphere" is distinctive, leading into the piano-drums intro to the title track; the second (earlier) is richer pianowise, while Haden and Motian get in some nice licks. This is early work in Jarrett's career, but it helps explain why he made such a huge splash. [9]

Keith Jarrett: *Treasure Island* (1974, Impulse -09) His peak period, having left Miles Davis to run two stellar quartets as well as the marathon solo that made him legendary; this is the American quartet, second album, his rockish chording and Charlie Haden's phat bass propelling Dewey Redman into paroxysms of joy. [9]

Keith Jarrett: *Mysteries* (1975, Impulse) Four cuts are framed by Redman's intensely expressive sax, with the pianist so abstract you'd think he had finally found a way to one-up Motian. In between, Jarrett picks up a Pakistani flute on "Flame" and literally breaks out of his world. [9]

Keith Jarrett: *Shades* (1975, Impulse) Same group, may even be from the same session, but it's hard to tell which takes are out and in -- except, that is, for "Diatribes," which is as far out as this group ever got, rough and raging, something you always knew Redman had in him. [8]

Keith Jarrett: *Bop-Be* (1976, Impulse -78): The last album of Jarrett's US Quartet, with Dewey Redman on tenor, Charlie Haden on bass, and Paul Motian on drums, going out with a little bit special from each of the stars; Jarrett had an extraordinarily prodigious stretch in the early 1970s, but thenceforth limited himself to trios and solos -- this reminds you how strong a force he could be in a group. [9]

Keith Jarrett: *Hymns/Spheres* (1976, ECM -2CD -13) An exercise in baroque pipe organ played at Benedictine Abbey in Ottobeuren, Germany, the hymns sound appropriately (even stuffily) churchy, the 9-movement "Spheres" more new agey and more appealing for that -- you weren't expecting some B3 funk moves, were you? [6]

Keith Jarrett Trio: *Standards Live* (1985, ECM -86) The trio (Gary Peacock, Jack DeJohnette) hardly needs introduction. Not too obvious here -- "Too Young to Go Steady" seems exceptionally good, replete with Jarrett's Glenn Gould-ish grunts which are as much a part of the music as Fred Astaire's taps. I have the first two volumes of Jarrett standards down at B, which will need to be re-validated at some point -- I don't know if this is any better, but the live ambiance does add something to the mix. And of course in the 18 years since Jarrett got into his standards kick and put this marvelous trio together he's recorded such a mountain of trio work that it all sort of blends in together, yet cries out for someone to sort it out. As an impulsive dabbler, I doubt that I can do that. [+]

Keith Jarrett: *The Melody at Night, With You* (1999, ECM) Solo piano, worked through at deliberate speed -- unlike, e.g., his most famous solo work, *The Köln Concert*. Delicate, lovely, fascinating. [+]

Herb Jeffries

Herb Jeffries: *Say It Isn't So* (1957, Bethlehem -01) A matinée-idol crooner, most famous for his brief

(1940-42) tenure with Duke Ellington, never the best judge of vocal talent; Russ Garcia's strings try to play to Jeffries' strengths, a marble-like stature and a sense that time stretches to infinity. [4]

Billy Jenkins

Billy Jenkins with the Voice of God Collective: *Sounds Like Bromley* (1982, VOTP) A little unprepossessing for the Voice of God, at least until the last track when they finally do shake the earth. Three horns -- trumpet, trombone, tenor sax -- more oompah band than bebop, with an extra guitar, bass, drums and percussion, but no human voices. I keep shying away from calling what he does surreal or dada because it's too corny, and too populist, with just enough stray noise and weirdness to keep it from ever going popular. [8]

Billy Jenkins with the Voice of God Collective: *Greenwich* (1985, VOTP) A big step toward the avant-garde, most likely due to the two new saxophonists replacing the trumped on *Sounds Like Bromley*. I have no idea who Skid Solo is -- name comes from a comic strip about a Formula 1 driver, but you can see how it might relate -- but Iain Ballamy is well known and a major pickup here. Not that the guitarist's cartoonish populism doesn't poke through here and there, nor that the slow ones can get wobbly, but this is a pretty amazing band when they're skittering about, and Ballamy adds some real stature. [9]

Billy Jenkins: *Uncommerciality: Volume One* (1986, VOTP) One of those early albums, seems like it might be a comp but all six tracks date from Jan-Feb 1986, a sextet with two saxes (one switching to bass clarinet), electric bass and guitar, drums and percussion. Titles are certainly uncommercial -- "Spastics Dancing," "Sade's Lips," "Margaret's Menstrual Problems" -- but the music is within grasp, the guitar mostly hot and bluesy fusion, Iain Ballamy's tenor sax on "Pharoah Sanders" a good deal more contained -- amusingly so -- than the model, although in general he's one of the more powerful saxophonists of the 1980s. Couldn't play first track, one reason for hedging. [8]

Billy Jenkins: *Scratches of Spain* (1987, Babel -94) Also credited to VOGC, or the Voice of God Collective. The cover is a take-off from Miles Davis' *Sketches of Spain*, but the music is, well, pure Billy Jenkins, if that means anything to you. Jenkins plays guitar and a little violin. The VOGC evidently consists of 17 other credited musicians: I don't recognize many names, but Iain Bellamy (saxophones) is a key Jenkins sidekick; two other names I recognize are Django Bates (keyboards) and Steve Arguelles (drums). Actually, to follow the booklet strictly, Jenkins plays *spaß guitar* -- the only indication of what that means is that the three trumpets are qualified as "Straight," "Trad," and "Spaß." The saxophones are Spaß, Straight, and Bigtime (that's Bellamy, of course). What you get from all this instrumentation is manic noise, but for all its intended anarchy it's noise that stays loosely in formation. For most of the album he/they seem to be holding back, but they explode on the trad jazz finale, splattering dixieland all over the kitchen sink. This is only the second one I've heard of a dozen or more albums he's put out. The other, his deconstruction of Donovan-era '60s pop called *True Love Collection*, is an unqualified masterpiece. This is a bit fuzzier, but then anarchism's like that. [9]

Billy Jenkins: *Uncommerciality: Volume Two* (1988, VOTP) Now, this is more like uncommercial, with a circusy sound indicated by Iain Ballamy spending more time on soprano than tenor sax, and Jenkins more time hacking at the strings instead of blues or fusion riffing. "Isn't It a Great World We Live In" features the VOGC Junior League Vocal Chorus -- VOGC stands for Voice of God Collective. "Girl Getting Knocked Over" descends into nursery rhymes. "Black Magic" breaks the kiddie spell for

some expansive space mystery. "Blue Broadway" is a boogie woogie, with chorus and romping street horns that sound more New York than New Orleans, not that they do that sort of thing in New York. Again, first track "temporarily unavailable," and a couple of others failed intermittently, the only thing that dimmed my smile. [8]

Billy Jenkins: *Uncommerciality: Volume Three* (1991, VOTP) Not commercial either, but the populism here is so big-hearted the masses are missing out on a lot of fun. First cut opens with organ, horn section, the VOGS Male Voice Choir, and Harriet Jenkins spoken word -- why not just call it rap? Jenkins plays keyboards, violin, and electric bass as well as his usual guitar, by turns fast, heavy, psychedelic. "Dancing in Ornette Coleman's Head" is a great title. Indeed, everything here dances, although "Land of the Free" slows it down to a waltz. [9]

Billy Jenkins: *Still . . . Sounds Like Bromley* (1995, Babel -97) This is a strange record, at times filling me with awe, at others freaking me out. The huge and diverse lineup wreaks intense playfulness, sounding like the ultimate psychedelic circus. One suspects satire at points, but satire without irony is impossible, and this seems way too naive to be ironic. Rather, it's mania at play. [9]

Billy Jenkins with the Blues Collective: *S.A.D.* (1996, Babel) Like a Brit Blood Ulmer, an avant-jazz guitarist who likes to sing gravitates to the blues. A pretty straight blues album at that -- even a horn section -- but titles like "Ain't Gonna Play No Jazz No More" and "Jazz Had a Baby (and They Called It Avant-Garde)" betray where he's coming from. Where he's going is harder to tell. The closer, a slab of slide guitar psychedelia called "Goodbye Blues," formally resembles some of his pop-music contortions. [+]

Billy Jenkins: *Suburbia* (1999, Babel) The credits include screaming kids, lawn mowers, and the kitchen sink. The kids, at least, appear in a piece called "Coke Cans in Yet Garden," with Jenkins' electric guitar soaring around them. This starts with a cryptic, broken blues piece, and ends with an r&b sendup that concludes suburbia is "a place to come from." Intermittently amazing, as usual, just a little more intermittent than some of his others. [8]

Antonio Carlos Jobim

Antonio Carlos Jobim: *Wave* (1967, A&M) Jobim was perhaps the key songwriter behind Brazil's bossa nova assault on the US market, but this was one of the first major efforts to introduce him as a performer. Produced by Creed Taylor, with a big string section and battery of flutes and piccolo arranged by Claus Ogerman, the record is nonetheless distinguished by its simplicity and elegance. Jobim's own guitar is featured strongly, and that's what sticks with you, as the masses and multitudes fade into the woodwork. One might fault it for being too polite, and I might reshuffle my evaluation when/if I become more familiar with his enormous (and thus far by me unsampled) oeuvre. But for now this seems to be a fine introduction. [9]

Antonio Carlos Jobim: *Stone Flower* (1970, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -10) Lush and dreamy at best, more often overgrown and muddled, with Jobim's gentle voice caressed by Eumir Deodato's unnamed strings, floating on the blips of his own electric piano, nudged on by Airto Moreira's percussion, engaging only if you reach out for it. [5]

Antonio Carlos Jobim & Elis Regina: *Elis & Tom* (1974, Verve -08) Regina doesn't have much more range than Astrud Gilberto, but she hits the right tone here for a set of classic Jobim, done simply or

with full orchestra, sometimes the difference scarcely matters. [9]

Antonio Carlos Jobim: *Finest Hour* (1963-86, Verve -00) An important songwriter, a fairly decent pianist, not a very distinctive performer, although the latter is hard to tell for sure. This starts with three cuts from *Getz/Gilberto*, for which see the whole albums (for that matter, don't flinch from Getz' *The Bossa Nova Years*, where more just keeps growing grander). The other Jobim recordings have been hit-and-miss, and I don't have a good handle on them. This seems like an OK introduction. [+]

Antonio Carlos Jobim and the New Band: *Passarim* (1986-87, Verve) The genial Brazilian melodies go down easy enough, but the strings and voluminous backing vocals make this more complex than seems necessary or appropriate. I'm just poking around in his catalog as opportunity presents. [5]

Antonio Carlos Jobim/Gal Costa: *Rio Revisited* (1987, Verve -08) A live set covering the usual songbook from "One Note Samba" to "Corcovado," the seductive grooves lifted from the weak sound by Costa and a backing chorus. [7]

Budd Johnson

Budd Johnson: *Blues à la Mode* (1958, Felsted) Tenor saxophonist, the missing link between Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster, and on their level -- once you're aware of him, as few people are, you'll find him everywhere; Charlie Shavers adds some fine trumpet, and Vic Dickenson and Al Sears add to the rousing septet, but on his own Johnson plays some of the most romantic tenor sax you'll ever hear; also available with a later session as *The Stanley Dance Sessions* (1958-67, Lone Hill Jazz -05). [9]

Budd Johnson: *The Stanley Dance Sessions* (1958-67, Lone Hill Jazz -05) Johnson is the link between Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster, and I mean literally: Webster was a pianist before Johnson taught him to play the tenor sax. Johnson doesn't have much under his own name, but he shows up on dozens of recordings from the '30s until his death in 1984, especially in the employ of Earl Hines. He rarely dominates a record, but he usually adds something distinctive. And even when you don't notice him, he's the sort of player who just seems to make everyone around him better. In 1958 critic Stanley Dance produced a series of mainstream swing albums, including one called *Blues à la Mode* with Johnson, Charlie Shavers, and Vic Dickenson. It's hardly a stretch for anyone involved -- just a lovely little exercise in effortless swing. Lone Hill is a new Spanish label which is making a specialty of rescuing out-of-print '50s obscurities. They've done a nice job here, supplementing the original album with four '67 Earl Hines cuts, including two ear openers with Johnson on soprano sax. [9]

Budd Johnson: *Ya! Ya! [The Definitive Black & Blue Sessions]* (1970, Black & Blue -02) An unsung hero, the guy who taught Ben Webster to play tenor sax, on a swing through France with Charlie Shavers on trumpet, pretty much as underrated as Johnson, and some local unknowns on "Body and Soul" and a batch of blues -- bread and butter, cheese and red wine. [7]

Clarence "Jelly" Johnson

Clarence "Jelly" Johnson: *Low Down Papa* (1920s, Delmark -11) Obscure early stride pianist, recorded a bit 1923-25 but is nicely represented on these clean "enhanced pianola rolls" -- a little bloodless compared to the usual 1920s scratchiness, but a fine example of the emerging stride style. [7]

J.J. Johnson

J.J. Johnson: *J.J.'s Broadway* (1963, Verve -03) Half recorded with a small group, including a lovely but uneventful "My Favorite Things"; half recorded with a bunch of extra trombones; a transitional album, somewhere between J.J.'s early virtuosity and his later panache for arranging, which means it's neither here nor there. [4]

Tom Johnson

Tom Johnson/Eberhard Blum: *Rational Melodies* (1993, Hat Art) Johnson wrote for the Village Voice about "new music" from 1972-82, and toward the end was composing some of his own; his "Rational Melodies" dates from 1982 and has been recorded several times, here by flautist Blum; even hard-core flutophobes should give this a chance, the instrument's tell-tale timber melting away when faced with such logic. [8]

Elvin Jones

Brother of Hank and Thad Jones, at the time best known as the drummer in the John Coltrane Quartet. Never wrote much, but was charismatic enough to put together a substantial discography as a leader -- but not enough to rival Art Blakey.

Elvin Jones/Jimmy Garrison Sextet Featuring McCoy Tyner: *Illumination!* (1963, Impulse) In other words, the rhythm section with three saxophonists -- Prince Lasha, Sonny Simmons, and Charles Davis -- plugged into Coltrane's slot. Everyone but Jones chips in a song, and Davis's baritone keeps grounded even when the other switch to flute and English horn. [6]

Elvin Jones: *Dear John C.* (1965, Impulse) Looks like a Coltrane tribute, but plays more like Jones's resignation from the quartet: Richard Davis plays bass, Roland Hanna and Hank Jones split the piano spot, and the sax slot goes to altoist Charlie Mariano, on a program that taps Ellington, Gillespie-Parker, Mingus, and some standards. Mariano, of course, is fine, but unconflicted where Coltrane was forever tying himself in knots. [7]

Etta Jones

Etta Jones/Houston Person: *Don't Misunderstand: Live in New York* (1980, High Note -07) Jones only sings three songs, revealing little beyond her undoubted competency, so her top billing is misleading; Person picks up the slack, his tenor sax all honey, so sweet he turns "Blue Monk" out as a natural standard, even managing to elevate organist Sonny Phillips' blues jams. [6]

Hank Jones

The Jones Brothers: *Keepin' Up With the Joneses* (1958, Verve -99) The Jones Brothers are Hank, Thad, and Elvin. Each is a major figure in postwar jazz. The band is filled out with Eddie Jones, not a brother but at least a Jones, on bass. The album cover proclaims "playing the music of Thad Jones and Isham Jones." Isham is another non-brother brought in by the all-Jones concept. He played tenor sax, composed, and led an orchestra that was taken over by Woody Herman. When this was cut Elvin was 21, not the major figure he soon became. (I'm writing this a couple of days after he died, at which point

it's safe to say that he was one of the all-time greats.) Hank and Thad are both prominent here, but Thad's somewhat fragile tone and idiosyncratic play makes the strongest impression. Some lovely work here. [+]

Hank Jones: *The Talented Touch/Porgy and Bess* (1958-59, Okra-Tone -04) A twofer of trio albums by the great Detroit bebop pianist, stretching out on repertoire items. [+]

Hank Jones & Oliver Nelson: *Happenings* (1966, Impulse): Featuring Clark Terry, whose big-band trumpet is seamless, but whose vocal on "Winchester Cathedral" is the record's great novelty moment. Jones offers a fine piano feature, but he spends most of the album playing electric harpsichord in arrangements that are remarkably polished but also corny and occasionally ridiculous. [5]

Hank Jones: *Hank* (1976, All Art -91) Solo piano. All standards, starting with seven Ellingtons, ending with things like "Alone Together" and "My Heart Stood Still" and "The Very Thought of You." All played simply, with just a whiff of elegance. But then that's what Jones does: later trios like *The Oracle* and his Thad Jones tribute *Upon Reflection* are built around the same simplicity, elegance, and tenderness -- that may be the best word to distinguish him. Feeling lowdown this morning, I just put this on to move it off my shelf, and I was the one moved. It won't work as background. It may not even work as foreground if you're upbeat. But today it hit the spot. [9]

Hank Jones/Cheick-Tidiene Seck: *Sarala* (1996, Verve) Pretty good griot meets pretty good piano player. [+]

Quincy Jones

Quincy Jones and His Orchestra: *The Quintessence* (1961, Impulse -07) Crisp big band arrangements, eight songs in a scant 30:45, the leader already beyond playing trumpet -- why bother when you can hustle up Freddie Hubbard, Thad Jones, Clark Terry, and Snooky Young? [7]

Quincy Jones: *Explores the Music of Henry Mancini* (1964, Verve -09) This turns out to be an interesting match, where Mancini's playful movie music gets some interesting twists from a big band with its own sense of whimsy, with Jones tapping not only his usual stars but young blood like Gary Burton and Roland Kirk. [8]

Quincy Jones: *Smackwater Jack* (1971, A&M -09) A transitional record, jonesing to go pop but lacking the charisma to put it across, and still with all his networking tempted to sneak in lots of nice little jazz touches, like he was doing a soundtrack or something. [5]

Quincy Jones: *You've Got It Bad Girl* (1973, Verve -09) Mixed bag, mostly soft soul tracks with vocals, two from Stevie Wonder suffering the most, a fetching instrumental "Eyes of Love," a respectable "Manteca," some mediocre theme music; short even for LPs at 29:28. [4]

Spike Jones

Musical Depreciation Revue: The Spike Jones Anthology (1942-59, Rhino -2CD -94) As a musician, Jones perfected a rousing circus style augmented by whistles and gongs and other odd hard-to-describe sound effects. His singers, including Mel Blanc, were skit artists, sometimes murdering classics, more often skewering popular songs -- a favorite technique is to add context, explaining why "All I Want for Christmas (Is My Two Front Teeth" came about), with a few sui generis concoctions like "Wild Bill

Hiccup" -- probably an update to a vaudeville parlay. The comedy is cheap, and dated, and this isn't something I'll feel like playing much in the future, but it's so unique (and frequently thrilling) I can't complain much. [9]

Thad Jones

Thad Jones: *The Magnificent Thad Jones* (1956, Blue Note -07) The slowest great trumpet player of his generation, Jones never dazzled you with his chops, but he had an uncanny knack for finding right places for his notes, and at his moderate pace you get to savor the full beauty of the instrument. [9]

Thad Jones: *Detroit-New York Junction* (1956, Blue Note -07) The middle Jones brother mastered bebop but never lost his interest in big bands -- he worked for Basie at the time, and splits the difference with this elegant sextet, mostly made up of his Detroit chums gone to the big city. [8]

Thad Jones & Mel Lewis: *Live at the Village Vanguard* (1967, Blue Note -05) The Jones-Lewis big band was a triumph of will over history, proving that the economics and aesthetic trends that drove everyone else into small groups weren't fate -- they were mere obstacles; Jones, like Dizzy Gillespie with half the chops but his own sneaky genius, was a modernist committed to big band bebop; Lewis was the drummer who kept Stan Kenton's juggernauts on track; they worked steadily at the Vanguard -- even after Jones died Lewis stubbornly kept the orchestra going -- but at this point the band was especially huge, and they sound glorious. [9]

Louis Jordan

Louis Jordan: *Five Guys Named Moe* (1943-45, Charly -93) A useless collection, with absolutely no documentation as to when these 20 cuts originated, and nothing on the internet to make up for the deficit, although the music is prime, and the titles don't intersect much with MCA's two essential *Best Of* volumes -- haven't checked against Proper's 4-CD *Jivin' With Jordan*, as good a place to start as any. Two songs are introduced as V Discs -- recordings Jordan and many others made for Armed Forces Radio during WWII, so that seems like a possibility, but adding to the confusion Charly released a second Jordan comp in 1993 explicitly based on the V Discs: *Five Guys Named Moe (The V Discs)* -- 14 cuts, all titles also here (hmm?). The same 14 cuts show up in Collectors' Choice's 1998 release of Jordan's *V-Disc Recordings*, so that seems to be that -- a reasonable guess is that this is the V Discs (1943-45) plus six more or less contemporaneous recordings, which would make it a bargain and a nice supplement to Jordan's jukebox hits. Still, unforgivable that they tell you none of that. [5]

Ronny Jordan

Ronny Jordan: *A Brighter Day* (1999, Blue Note -00) AMG refers to him as "one of the acid jazz movement's most prominent guitarists." Never knew what acid jazz was; he strikes me as a pleasantly funky guitarist working in the synth-dominated smooth jazz field. But it's worth noting that when he wants vibes he brings in Roy Ayers or Stefon Harris, when he wants a flute he goes to Steve Wilson, and for a guest piano spot he taps Onaje Allen Gumbs. Finally, he brings in Mos Def for a remix. With such talent you'd expect this to be, like, not bad. Wish it were that clear. [3]

Sheila Jordan

Sheila Jordan/Harvie S: *Yesterdays* (1990, High Note -12: Born 1928, but aside from the one-shot *Portrait of Sheila* in 1962 she didn't really get her career going until the late 1970s, and still hasn't been given her due -- although she's spent so much time traveling and teaching since 1990 I'm not finding dozens of aspiring jazz singers acknowledging their debts to her. Early on she paid plenty of dues, chasing Bird, and catching his pianist Duke Pearson. George Russell finally put her in front of a microphone: I'd put that on the list of his major accomplishments-- along with synthesizing Cuban bebop for Dizzy Gillespie, teaching Miles Davis and John Coltrane how to use modes, introducing electronics to jazz, and inspiring a whole generation of Scandinavian jazz stars. I first ran into her on Roswell Rudd's mid-1970s albums -- the totally forgotten *Numatik Swing Band* and the even-more-marvelous *Flexible Flyer* -- and followed her through Steve Kuhn's group, into her solo albums -- many with nothing more than bass fiddle for accompaniment. This set, recorded "live in concert, circa 1990," is one of those, with the former Harvie Swartz on bass. More standards, less bebop/vocalese, than her studio albums, which means more touchstones you think you know but will hear something new in here. Her control is so remarkable that even though she breaks up laughing in the Fats Waller medley she never misses a note. Only in the closer, "I Could Have Danced All Night," does she finally lose it, a joke you can't help but enjoy. [9]

Theo Jörgensmann

Theo Jörgensmann: *Fellowship* (1998, Hatology -05) German clarinet player, has at least 15 albums since 1978; sextet with two saxophonists -- Charlie Mariano on alto and Petras Vysniauskas on soprano -- and Karl Berger doubling up on vibes and piano, working on three long pieces with many sharp passages but also some indecision. [7]

Pandelis Karayorgis

Pandelis Karayorgis/Nate McBride/Ken Vandermark: *No Such Thing* (1999, Boxholder -01) Both ends of this trio can be combustible, which is hinted at early on, but the music calms down -- the closer, a Vandermark dedication to Jimmy Giuffre, is quite lovely. [7]

Roger Kellaway

Roger Kellaway/Red Mitchell: *Life's a Take* (1992, Concord -93) Piano-bass duets, one hint being that both started out on the other's instrument, both mainstream players, the younger pianist more directly indebted to the older generation, the older bassist just a few months from his grave; something to savor. [8]

Rodney Kendrick

Rodney Kendrick: *The Secrets of Rodney Kendrick* (1993, Verve -94) Jazz pianist, started in funk groups, moved on to Abbey Lincoln, landed a major label contract, released this imposing mainstream debut, aligning his stars -- Roy Hargrove, Graham Haynes, Kenny Garrett, Houston Person -- picking up extra percussion, and breezing through the piano breaks. [9]

Rodney Kendrick: *Last Chance for Common Sense* (1995, Verve -96) Reviewing this on Election Day 2012, the title seems premature, but he was probably looking for prophetic; less star power in the horns, but with Dewey Redman and Patience Higgins more edge, bouncing off rougher rhythms; with only one album since 1998, wonder what happened to such a talented pianist. [8]

Masabumi Kikuchi

Tethered Moon (Masabumi Kikuchi, Gary Peacock, Paul Motion): *Play Kurt Weill* (1995, JMT) Very slowly. [4]

Jonny King

Jonny King: *Notes From the Underground* (1995, Enja) King's book, *What Jazz Is*, is one of those things that I feel like I really ought to read, but somehow never find time for. He's a smart guy, and a fine piano player. This is a well regarded album, and I'm duly impressed by the craft. Let's call this "textbook good jazz"; problem is I've played it well over a dozen times, and while it sounds fine, it really doesn't do anything for me. The big name guests are Joshua Redman, whose sound has been getting thinner and more syrupy the more he studies Lester Young, and Steve Nelson, a perfectly good vibes player who has never quite made it as a force on his own. (Unlike, say, Khan Jamal or Joe Locke.) [5]

John Kirby

The John Kirby Sextet: *Complete Columbia & RCA Victor Recordings* (1939-42, Definitive -2CD -00) Kirby was a bassist of some distinction with the Fletcher Henderson band, but his collaborators here were equally important: Henderson's veteran clarinetist Buster Bailey, future Armstrong All Star Billy Kyle, future Ellington stalwart Russell Procope, and most of all the redoubtable Charlie Shavers, whose trumpet is usually muted here. The Kirby Sextet was billed as "the biggest little band in the land," but it's may be more accurate to dub them the coolest band in small group swing. They wore tuxes and bow ties, and their songbook drew on guys with names like Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Schubert, and Dvorak as well as the usual suspects, although it's hard to tell which is which without a scorecard. This set sums them up nicely. [9]

Rahsaan Roland Kirk

Roland Kirk With Jack McDuff: *Kirk's Work* (1961, Prestige -07) Soul jazz, a sax-organ quartet, albeit with a few surprises, like the cover picture of Kirk blowing into three saxophones; Kirk's flute work is also novel, emphasizing the instrument's hollow depth. [8]

Roland Kirk: *Rahsaan: The Complete Mercury Recordings of Roland Kirk* (1961-65, Mercury, -11CD -90) I bought this long ago but only recently cracked it open, giving it one quick pass -- ten hours (550:08) -- without bothering to break out the constituent albums (most out of print anyway). Aside from *Kirk's Work* (on Prestige), these are all of Kirk's early recordings, various studio and live groups, including an impressive set cut with Quincy Jones' big band. Some of it is brilliant, but much of it is widely scattered, including a lot of flute, some r&b vocals, and Kirk's famous three-horn gimmick, where he simultaneously plays tenor sax, strich, and manzello -- the latter two his inventions, although

they are now well known if not exactly common. Much to study here, one of the most distinctive saxophonists ever, but the less studious (and less flush) may prefer to seek out the two constituent albums here that have generally remained in print: 1961's *We Free Kings*, and 1965's *Rip, Rig & Panic* -- two career peaks. [7]

Rahsaan Roland Kirk & Al Hibbler: *A Meeting of the Times* (1966-72, Warner Jazz -04) Hibbler, best known for his tenure with Duke Ellington in the '40s, sings five songs -- the first side of the original LP. Kirk schmoozes adoringly behind him, playing flute as well as his panoply of reeds with exceptional restraint and good taste, then takes over for the instrumentals on the second half. Sensing the LP was a little short, the producer dug up a leftover "Dream" from 1966 with a Leon Thomas vocal. Ellington songs tie both halves together, and one of Kirk's originals ("Carney and Begard Place") has its head there. [10]

Rahsaan Roland Kirk: *(I, Eye, Aye): Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival, Switzerland, 1972* (1972, Rhino) Pretty much Kirk's usual thing -- flutes, sirens, showbiz flash, tricky playing, and he rocks out on occasion, which is, of course, an amazing thing to behold. [+]

John Klemmer

John Klemmer: *Barefoot Ballet* (1976, Verve) A series of light saxophone pieces, modestly blown, with just enough rhythm to keep them seductively on track; at this rate I doubt that he'll ever amount to much, but this is nice and easy to listen to, nothing excessive or cloying. [6]

John Klemmer: *Arabesque* (1977, Verve -08): A tenor saxophonist, starts out nearly solo to establish some cred, then eases off a bit to sail off on the synths and quasi-Latin percussion; nothing arabesque to the music, but he probably likes the sound of the word. [5]

Eric Kloss

Eric Kloss: *First Class!* (1966-67, Prestige -04) Blind since birth, but as prodigiously talented as anyone who ever picked up an alto saxophone, Kloss was barely 16 when he started recording for Prestige. He recorded prolifically up to 1981, then vanished. He could play anything, any way, but as far as I can tell he never developed a style or sound of his own. Some argue that he could have become the greatest jazz saxophonist of all time, but nobody argues that he actually did. This CD collects his 3rd and 4th LPs, cut when he was 17-18. The music is all over the place, but Prestige paired him with first rate modernists, keeping the mix interesting and providing a solid platform for Kloss to lick his chops. The first LP, *Grits & Gravy*, seems to have been meant as a soul jazz shot, but most of it was cut with Jaki Byard's trio, and it all seems a bit confused. At times it makes me wonder what he might have done in the age of Kenny G -- compared to which he's Roland Kirk. The latter LP, *First Class Kloss*, is more scattered and much more fun. It ranges from the warped polyphony of "Psychedelicatessen Rag" to the avant-blowout "African Cookbook" without stopping any place long enough to get your bearings -- except to marvel at Cedar Walton. [+]

Franz Koglmann

Franz Koglmann: *L'Heure Bleue* (1991, Hatology -03) German trumpet player, a big fave of *The Penguin Guide's* authors, one I've never really gotten into; he's slow and methodical, working with a

drummer-less quartet with Tony Coe (clarinet, tenor sax) and Burkhard Stangl (guitar) or a duo with Misha Mengelberg (piano), some abstract originals, thoughtful covers. [8]

Franz Koglmann: *Cantos I-IV* (1992, Hat Art) Four long pieces. A large group, with a wide range of horns, including oboe and two French horns. Koglmann himself sticks to flugelhorn. There is a lot of craft here, a complex layering of sounds, but it doesn't do much for me. [5]

Eero Koivistoinen

Eero Koivistoinen & Co.: *3rd Version* (1973, Porter -10) Finnish saxophonist near the start of a long and distinguished career. I imagine him listening to the contemporary English avant-garde, which took account of John McLaughlin's guitar and prog rock keys and spun them in more radical directions. With Kukka Tolonen on guitar and Heikki Sarmanto on electric piano, some furtive bird sounds, and blazing soprano-to-tenor sax. [9]

Lee Konitz

Lee Konitz: *Motion* (1961, Verve -03) Charles Mingus wrote a song where he claimed that "if Charlie Parker had been a gunslinger, there'd be a whole lot of dead copycats." Maybe so, but Konitz would have emerged unscathed, because he was one alto saxophonist who never sounded like Bird, nor anyone else. Konitz started out in Lennie Tristano's rarefied improvisational universe, but he didn't get stuck there, either -- since 1949's *Subconscious-Lee*, Konitz has followed his own unique muse. This session -- a trio with bass and drums (Elvin Jones!) -- is one of many high points in a discography that exceeds 100 albums and spans more than 50 years: it's a tour de force of melodic invention, with each note securely rooted in unanticipated logic. But note that this reissue limits itself to the original LP release, so it runs short (37:59), whereas Verve's 1998 (now out of print) reissue rounded up enough related material to stuff three superb CDs to the gills. [10]

Lee Konitz/Franco D'Andrea: *Inside Cole Porter* (1996, Philology) Inveterate outsiders, if you ask me, the snatches of recognizable Porter are few and far between. Still, I find these duos a bit more interesting than the Konitz-Alan Broadbent series, possibly because the pianist works harder to get to the roots of the songs, or maybe because the songs themselves have more guts. [+]

Lee Konitz: *Sound of Surprise* (1999, RCA) Played this while working on something else, knowing I wouldn't have to write about it, at least for now. It's rare to hear Konitz in a group with so many options, not that anything sounds cluttered here. Ted Brown is credited as a second saxophone, which I've rarely noticed -- no jousting, little (if any) unison work. The guitarist, however, is hard to miss, and not hard to identify as John Abercrombie. Marc Johnson and Joey Baron are really superb. Konitz gets to lay out more than usual, and he usually comes in light as a feather. Nothing flashy, but superb, thoughtful work. [9]

Peter Kowald

Peter Kowald *Quintet* (1972, FMP -73) German avant-bassist in one of his first albums, deploys an alto sax (Peter van de Locht) for some screech and two trombones (Günter Christmann and Paul Rutherford) to keep it dirty. They create a Godawful racket at first, then tone it down without sacrificing the tension. [6]

Peter Kowald/Wadada Leo Smith/Günter Sommer: *Touch the Earth -- Break the Shells* (1979-81, FMP -97) Bass-trumpet-drums trio, the bassist literally fleshes such out an amazing range of sound he threatens to reduce the others to accents, but neither reduce easily; Smith's spare eloquence is typical of him in this period; Sommer has a rapid roll to his drums, more rolling thunder than random lightning, but that all leads back to the remarkable bass work. [9]

Peter Kowald: *The Complete Duos: Europa America Japan* (1986-90, FMP -2CD -03) The German avant-garde's premier bassist cut many duets, including three albums (*Europa*, *America*, and *Japan*, for where they were recorded) shuffled into two CDs here -- an initial sampler released in 1991, and a second volume in 2003; 37 cuts, ranging from 2:19 to 7:00, with 26 partners, the Berlin and New York sessions with familiar names and instruments, the Tokyo sets much less so, a peculiar form of exotica; one could whittle this down -- a first approximation would be to keep the saxes, drums, and the remarkable pianist Irène Schweizer, while dropping the vocalists and thinning out the Tokyo sessions -- but largesse is the essence here, the more contexts the bassist navigates, the more impressive. [8]

Joachim Kühn

Joachim Kühn/Daniel Humair/J.F. Jenny-Clark: *Easy to Read* (1985, Owl) Exceptionally fresh and exciting piano trio, with real contributions from bass and drums, as well as some of the most astute piano I've heard lately. All in an old record, on a defunct label. [9]

Joachim Kühn/Mark Nauseef/Tony Newton/Miroslav Tadic: *Let's Be Generous* (1990, CMP) Fusion album, or at least that's the inevitable diagnosis given Tadic's electric guitar, Benton's electric bass, and Kühn's electric keyboards. Dense, probing, but a little on the thick side. Not a good place to get a feel for what Kühn can do on an acoustic piano. [+]

Steve Kuhn

Steve Kuhn: *Trance* (1974, ECM -05) Kuhn's electric piano on top of Steve Swallow's electric bass gives us several delightful exercises in light and sprightly rhythm; on the other hand, Kuhn's acoustic piano is more complex, labored, and conventional, at least in the sense that thoughtful, probing experimentation was avant-jazz's conventional mode. [7]

Steve Kuhn: *Years Later* (1992, Concord) Pretty good piano trio. [+]

Steve Kuhn/Steve Swallow: *Two by Two* (1995, Owl/Sunnyside -07) Piano/electric bass, two longtime masters, trading songbooks as well as lines; intimate, understated, seductive, but too respectful to shake much of anything loose. [6]

Leszek Kulakowski

Leszek Kulakowski: *Katharsis* (1999, Not Two) Polish pianist, cut three albums for Not Two 1999-2001 but seems to be more of a "third stream" type than an avant-gardist -- e.g., this is a piano trio combined with a string quartet, although that makes this seem less interesting, and a lot less fun, than it can be. [7]

Fela Anikulapo Kuti

Fela: *Koola Lobitos/The '69 L.A. Sessions* (1964-69, MCA -01) The earliest cuts here, dating from 1964, show Fela trying to play highlife, but sounding more like calypso. Strange as that sounds, after a couple of spins they start to make sense, with the jazz improves on the horns and the complex rhythms making up for whatever measure by which Fela falls short of the Trinidadian wordmasters. However, by the 1969 L.A. Sessions Fela's afrobeat was in full flower. In "Viva Nigeria", he concludes, "brothers and sisters in Africa/never should we learn to wage war/ against each other/let Nigeria be a lesson to all/we have more to learn towards building than destroying/our people can't afford any more suffering/let's join hands, Africa/we have nothing to lose/but we love to gain/war is not the answer/war has never been the answer/and it will never be the answer/fighting amongst each other/one nation indivisible/long live Nigeria, fever, Africa." [9]

Fela: *Shakara/London Scene* (1970-71, MCA -00) *Shakara* starts off prototypically, with a long instrumental vamp with Fela on keyboards leading into a vocal 3-4 minutes into a 13-minute piece. Second cut, same as the first. *London Scene* is harder and grittier, but a little wearing and none too distinct. [9]

Fela: *Roforofo Fight/The Fela Singles* (1972-73, MCA -01) More instrumental than most, and the music really jumps here. [9]

Fela: *Open & Close/Afrodisiac* (1971-73, MCA -01) Hard to say. But while the songs aren't especially distinct, the grooves never stop. [9]

Fela: *Confusion/Gentlemen* (1973-74, MCA -00) Stretching out now, "Confusion" warms up for 14 minutes before entering its lyric. [9]

Fela: *Expensive Shit/He Miss Road* (1975, MCA -00) Another good one, with "It's No Possible" riding on a nice keyboard riff. [9]

Fela: *Monkey Banana/Excuse O* (1975, MCA -01) Relatively laid back, easy tempos supporting the usual righteousness. Final track is a particularly strong example of Fela's song-speech backed by chorus, with a nice keyboard build-up. [9]

Fela: *Everything Scatter/Noise for Vendor Mouth* (1975, MCA -01) Typical sets, nothing really seems to jump out here. [9]

Fela: *Yellow Fever/Na Poi* (1975-76, MCA -00) "Yellow Fever" is another sermon; "Na Poi" (in two versions here) a sex song, but delivered in the usual cadences and patois, so it doesn't deliver the vicarious thrill that it might had you been there; "You No Go Die" another sermon. On further listen, while some of the double entendre of "Na Poi" is too cute, once the music kicks up it's pretty awesome. [9]

Fela: *Ikoyi Blindness/Kalakuta Show* (1976, MCA -01) The intro vamp to "Ikoyi Blindness" jumps from the start, drops into a pair of brass figures, then jumps again. The whole record keeps up this level of interest. [9]

Fela: *J.J.D./Unnecessary Begging* (1976-77, MCA -01) "J.J.D. (Johnny Just Drop)" is a long (23:21) piece; *Unnecessary Begging* has two usual sized pieces. Again, the pieces are strong rhythm tracks with much shorter vocal messages, the usual sharp rants. Fela's in a very strong groove at this point in his career. The only thing that diminishes interest in any one set is the consistency of all the rest. [9]

Fela: *Opposite People/Sorrow Tears and Blood* (1977, MCA -00) Drums, bass, guitar, keyboard, then three minutes in let's have some horns, then a romping sax solo, more horns, more sax, eventually a sermon, like the parable of trouser and pant: "If trouser commot [remove] for yansh [the behind] and pant no dey/All the craw-craw [rash] under your yansh go show." [9]

Fela: *Stalemate/Fear Not for Man* (1977, MCA -00) These pieces were recorded after Fela's Kalakuta Nation was routed. The first cut, "Stalemate", is par for the course, but the second, "Don't Worry About My Mouth O" is based on a delicate figure, but the halts for Fela to lecture on hygiene and Africanism preclude any groove. Closes with a nice long instrumental, but overall somewhat disappointing. [5]

Fela: *Shuffering and Shmiling/No Agreement* (1977-78, MCA -00) [9]

Fela: *Zombie* (1976-78, MCA -01) The title cut is Fela's taunt of the Nigerian military: "Zombie no think unless you tell them to think." It starts with vibrant horns and keeps up a ferocious beat, ending with a dollop of "Taps". Not one to let a point go understated, the next piece is called "Mister Follow Follow". This concludes with two previously unreleased live cuts, also quite invigorating. [9]

Fela: *Fela With Ginger Baker Live!* (1971-78, MCA -01) This adds a 16:22 drum duet featuring Ginger Baker and Tony Allen to the 1971 live album with Ginger Baker. While the drum piece is the most distinctive part of the album, the early live date is solid afrobeat, with a powerful version of "Black Man's Cry". [+]

Fela: *V.I.P./Authority Stealing* (1979-80, MCA -00) Live set, recorded in Germany, starts with spoken intro by Fela, explaining that VIP means "vagabonds in power". The sound is a little off on the live part, and "Authority Stealing" is not one of his stronger pieces, so while this might be OK on its own, it's not one of the better albums. [5]

Fela: *Upside Down/Music of Many Colours* (1976-80, MCA -01) In an interesting twist, the vocal to "Upside Down" (8 minutes in) is sung by long-time companion Sandra, although very much in Fela's style. It's a sharp, bouncy track. Next is one of Fela's traffic jam metaphors, "Go Slow", likening being stuck in a Lagos traffic jam to jail. The second half is a collaboration with vibraphonist Roy Ayers, which starts off jazzier than the norm, but stretches out and preaches like the Fela you expect. [+]

Fela: *Coffin for Head of State/Unknown Soldier* (1979-80, MCA -00) Two long pieces, "Coffin" runs 22:40, "Soldier" runs 31:11, which gives plenty of room to stretch two strong pieces. These pieces follow the destruction of Fela's Kalakuta Nation, showing an escalation of Fela's political stridency. [9]

Fela: *Original Sufferhead/I.T.T.* (1980-81, MCA -00) The 21:09 of "Original Sufferhead" is one of Fela's masterpieces. Whereas similar length pieces in the past were split into two parts, this one seems to have been a single LP side ("Power Show" on the other side), and he builds up relentless power with the length. the 24-minute "I.T.T. (International Thief Thief)" shifts the rant from Nigeria's military brutality and civil incompetence to global capitalism. "Power Show" builds to a quick crescendo on saxophone, then stretches out. [10]

Fela: *Live in Amsterdam* (1984, MCA -01) Gap in time here, probably something horrible in between. The live sound isn't quite as good as the studio, but that seems more evident at the start than when it gets cranking. And it does get cranking. Live Fela stretches out even longer: "M.O.P." runs over 37 minutes. Not regarded as a particularly good album, but "Custom Check Point" impresses me plenty. [+]

Fela: *Army Arrangement* (1985, MCA -01) Two long pieces, solid, not really spectacular. "Army Arrangement" was also released by Celluloid in a version remixed by Bill Laswell, and there's always been a lot of argument about which version is better. (Most arguing that Laswell ruined the thing, but I have Laswell's version on LP, and always liked it.) [+]

Fela: *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense* (1986-89, MCA) Augments the original 1986 album with a piece from 1989's *Beasts of No Nation*. Played this three times without ever really connecting to it; maybe fatigue setting in. [6]

Fela: *The Best Best of Fela Kuti* (1972-89, MCA -2CD -99) This cherry picks from "Lady" to "O.D.O.O", usually going with edited versions or second parts to keep the average time per song down around 13 minutes. Faultless sampler. [10]

Fela: *Beasts of No Nation/O.D.O.O.* (1989-90, MCA -01) Back from two years in jail, "Beasts of No Nation" twists around a Botha quote. The music is shifty and subtle, the lyric ranging wide, the vocal much slyer than Fela's usual declamatory style. As I recall, I didn't think much of the original LP, perhaps because the piece's 28 minutes were broken up into two too-short pieces. "O.D.O.O." is another long one, 31:53. Sounds more typical, flows well. [+]

Fela: *Underground System* (1990-92, MCA -01) Although Fela didn't die until 1997, this seems to have been his last album. (The CD also includes "Confusion Break Bones" from the original "ODOO" album.) The two *Underground System* pieces are deep political tracts, engaging pieces. Offhand, "CBB" seems mostly loud. [+]

Steve Lacy

Steve Lacy: *The Forest and the Zoo* (1966, ESP-Disk -08) Two 20-minute pieces, "Forest" and "Zoo," cut live in Buenos Aires with South Africans Johnny Dyani and Louis Moholo on bass and drums. The soprano sax great is in classic squeaky form, but the real jolt to the memory here is trumpeter Enrico Rava -- genteel and laconic of late, he snatches these pieces like a pit bull and never lets go. [9]

Steve Lacy: *The Gap* (1972, Free America/Verve -05) Starts scratchy, with both Lacy and Steve Potts on soprano sax and Irene Aebi's cello added to bass and drums, but it levels out a bit with songs dedicated to Johnny Hodges and Sonny Clark. [5]

Steve Lacy: *Estilhaços: Live in Lisbon* (1972, Clean Feed -12) Still waiting for the avalanche of previously unissued recordings promised after the soprano sax legend's death in 2004, and eager to look at every piece that does appear to see how it fits into the puzzle. This one has been released before, first on LP in 1972, then on CD in 1996, both on obscure Portuguese labels. Lacy's quintet has rarely raised such a ruckus, and while much of it is hard to take, it does give you a sense of the thrill of freedom. I doubt that this had any role in triggering the revolution that freed Portugal two years later, but if Salazar had heard it I don't doubt that it would have scared the bejesus out of him -- in which case I'd have to grade it much higher. [6]

Steve Lacy/Michael Smith: *Sidelines* (1976, Improvising Artists -92) Piano and soprano sax duets. Even at its simplest, with Smith hacking a chord and Lacy working scales, it can be ingenious. But it does fall apart somewhat on the last track, something called "Worms": atonal, arhythmic, contrasting blocks of sound, clashing even. [5]

Steve Lacy: *Live at Jazzwerkstatt Peitz* (1981, Jazzwerkstatt -06) The most important soprano saxophonist of the latter half of the 20th century, by a margin that's hard to conceive of, takes a few pieces solo, unfettered by anything but his imagination; the results are often astonishing, but the narrow range and stringent tone of the horn itself can wear on you. [7]

Steve Lacy Nine: *Futurities Part I* (1984, Hat Now -89) *Part II*, in particular, is often regarded as one of the high points in Lacy's catalog. The front cover says: "Music: Steve Lacy/Words: Robert Creeley." The real problem with words on Lacy albums is usually his singer/wife, Irène Aebi. She has a deep operatic voice, without the slightest hint of swing, so everything she does hardens into euroclassical art-song. She's been the bane of many a Lacy album, but I'm not sure that she's the real problem here: in struggling to wrap Creeley's words up in music, much of Lacy's part here gets real convoluted. It's not without interest -- cf. George Lewis on trombone -- but it is plenty tough to warm up to. [4]

Steve Lacy & Evan Parker: *Chirps* (1985, FMP -91): The two giants of modern soprano sax in a duo; I would have expected more stylistic clash, but they're very attentive to each other, up and down and in and out, more like birds dancing than chirping; of course, the sonics are limited to the instrument, which is difficult to play and difficult to listen to over the long haul. [7]

Steve Lacy: *Five Facings/Five Pianists* (1996, Jazzwerkstatt -08) Duo pieces with five avant pianists; Marilyn Crispell warms him up; Misha Mengelberg pitches Monk tunes that are softballs for both; but Ulrich Gumpert pushes the soprano saxophonist into his top level, and Fred Van Hove joins him there, while the finale with Vladimir Miller winds down admirably. [8]

Scott LaFaro

Scott LaFaro: *Pieces of Jade* (1961-85, Resonance -09) A belated souvenir of the legendary bassist, dead in a car crash at age 25 shortly after blossoming on Bill Evans' remarkable 1961 Village Vanguard sets; five fine piano trio cuts with Don Friedman and Pete LaRoca, a 22:44 practice tape with Evans, an Evans interview from 1966, and a Friedman solo from 1985, appropriately called "Memories for Scotty." [5]

Oliver Lake

Oliver Lake: *NTU: Point From Which Creation Begins* (1976, Universal Sound -12) Early, coming out of St. Louis and thinking Africa, ten musicians with electric bass and piano, congas and toys, but plenty of brass when they need it, John Hicks on piano, and surprising guitar by someone named Richard Martin. [9]

Bobby Lamb

Bobby Lamb Meets Bob Florence With Trinity Big Band: *Trinity Fair* (1993, Hep -95) Lamb was an Irish trombonist, spent the better part of the 1950s in the US in the Kenton and Herman big bands, amply preparing him for this meeting, but if I read the credits correctly he's only the director here. [5]

Byard Lancaster

Byard Lancaster: *It's Not Up to Us* (1968, Water -03) Released on Atlantic spinoff Vortex when this

Philadelphia avant-gardist was stepping out of Coltrane's footsteps; plays a lot of flute here, substantial enough to lead especially with Sonny Sharrock's guitar covering his back, but his alto sax has more muscle. [7]

Byard Lancaster: *Personal Testimony* (1979, Porter -08) Starts with a 1979 solo album with piano and/or percussion overdubbed on his flute, alto sax, and other reeds -- not enough to overcome the minimal framework of solo efforts, but a rough precis of his toolkit; reissue adds six new pieces, also solo with overdubs, if anything sparer and starker. [6]

Prince Lasha

Prince Lasha & Sonny Simmons: *Firebirds* (1967, Contemporary/OJC -93) Simmons' post-1994 comeback period has been loaded with two-horn dates, mostly with Michael Marcus, in the footsteps of this early date. While both leaders play alto sax, Lasha switches to flute and alto clarinet, while Simmons switches to English horn, each providing a shade of variation. Still, the really muscular sax is most likely Simmons. The bass-drums, Buster Williams and Charles Moffett, vary the riddims, and Bobby Hutcherson has some standout moments. [7]

Bill Laswell

Bill Laswell: *Carlos Santana: Divine Light* (1973-74, Columbia/Legacy -01) Not sure how to file this, but Laswell got the nod, because that's what I did with his similar Miles Davis mix (*Panthalassa*). This one works from two 1973-74 albums, *Love Devotion Surrender* (jointly credited to John McLaughlin, who comes first) and *Illuminations* (jointly credited to Alice Coltrane, who comes second). The inspirations for both were primarily Indian, something his collaborators were more deeply into -- perhaps too deeply for their own good. The predominant motif is a shimmering sound, probably from Coltrane's harp, although the guitars mean to reinforce it. Sounds like pseudo-eastern mystical hooley to me, but then I was tipped off by the personnel, otherwise it might sound like new age gone to seed. [4]

Bill Laswell: *Deconstruction: The Celluloid Recordings* (1979-87, Restless -2CD -93) Bassist, likes a good beat, but also enjoys playing with free sax terrorist Peter Brötzmann, who tangles both sides up in knots before the groove resumes. Only 4 (of 25) cuts are directly credited to Laswell, plus six to Material (his main ride), others to Deadline, Massacre, Time Zone, Last Exit, and then there were African artists Laswell produced and otherwise toyed with, including Fela Kuti, Manu Dibango, and Touré Kunda, and proto-rappers the Last Poets. He was, in short, in the middle of a hive of activity bouncing off anything new that felt good, and he had his own record company to release it. He's worked at the same furious pace ever since, but these were his good old days. [9]

Yusef Lateef

Yusef Lateef: *Psychicmotus* (1965, Impulse -05) There is something odd about Lateef's world music -- in some ways he's ahead of the times, but in others it feels like he found his exotica in old National Geographic; here he hops about the globe from flute to bamboo flute, never settling anywhere long enough to get comfortable, neglecting the tenor sax which is his true calling. [5]

Hubert Laws

Hubert Laws: *Morning Star* (1972, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -10) Flautist, cut a couple albums for Atlantic before Creed Taylor adopted him; Don Sebesky goes whole hog here, including vocals as well as strings and his bassoon fetish, although you could miss the mild brass colorings; Laws tries to keep it tastefully cosmological, something he wasn't always able to manage. [4]

Hubert Laws: *In the Beginning* (1974, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -10) Originally a 2LP, the flautist's major league move taps Satie and trad, Rollins and Coltrane, adding one original ("Mean Lene"), and brings in Ronnie Laws for some tenor sax muscle behind the flute; strings are down to one each, percussion up to Airtio and Dave Friedman's vibes, Bob James yucking it up on electric piano; still, the leads fall on the flute, which isn't really up to them. [5]

Ronnie Laws

The Best of Ronnie Laws (1975-80, Blue Note -92) Laws mostly plays tenor sax. He has a nice tone and seems to know his shit, but he rarely plays in contexts -- most of what I've heard is crossover and/or latin -- that put his talents to good use. This is pulled from several early albums, and it's certainly not his best -- not even very good. He returned to Blue Note in 1996 for a tribute to Eddie Harris (seems like a good idea) and followed that up with something called *Portrait of the Isley Brothers* (harder to imagine that working out, but he's played with them). [3]

Yank Lawson

The World's Greatest Jazzband of Yank Lawson & Bob Haggart Live (1970, Atlantic -88) The front cover title continues: "with Billy Butterfield, Vic Dickenson, Bud Freeman, Gus Johnson, Jr., Lou McGarrity, Ralph Sutton, Bob Wilber." Lawson played for Ben Pollack, Bob Crosby, and Tommy Dorsey during the '30s, and Benny Goodman in the '40s. By the '50s he was classic enough to play King Oliver's parts on Louis Armstrong's *A Musical Autobiography*. The rest of the band is more/less as legendary (Dickenson and Freeman are on the more side). The world's greatest? I wouldn't rate them favorites in a battle of the bands with Chick Webb, let alone Count Basie or Duke Ellington, but as trad groups go they got a lot of talent and feel for the music. [+]

Julia Lee

A Proper Introduction to Julia Lee: That's What I Like (1944-52, Proper -04) Jay McShann is most famous today for siring Charlie Parker, but he was basically a boogie-woogie pianist, and more typical of his alumni were blues shouter Walter Brown and the hottest of Kansas City's red hot mamas, Julia Lee. She led a band in the '40s called Julia Lee and Her Boyfriends. [9]

Peggy Lee

Peggy Lee & Benny Goodman: *The Complete Recordings* (1941-47, Columbia/Legacy -2CD) This roughly documents the transition from big dance bands with the occasional singer to vocal stars backed by big orchestration. Lee is a good singer, but as the spotlight focuses in on her, the horns stultify into filler, and even Goodman's own effervescent solos -- which are often the high points here -- are

crowded out. [5]

Peggy Lee: *Black Coffee* (1953-56, Verve -04) Cut with two small jazz groups that do everything right, Lee works through a fine set of standards with equal aplomb; recommended to the Kansas Board of Education: "It Ain't Necessarily So." [9]

The Best of Miss Peggy Lee (1945-69, Capitol) This condenses an unheard 4CD box set, providing a good sampler for a dozen or so big pop hits, along with some dull early cuts with hubby Dave Barbour's band. [+]

Peter Leitch

Peter Leitch: *Trio/Quartet '91* (1991, Concord) This seems about par for Leitch, Concord, and post-Montgomery jazz guitarists the world over. John Swana plays trumpet/flugelhorn on occasion, but even there the guitar runs dominate. [5]

Lotte Lenya

Lotte Lenya: *Lenya Sings Weill: The American Theatre Songs* (1955-66, Sony Classical -99) German actress-singer (1898-1981), married to composer Kurt Weill, divorced, then reunited in New York as exiles from the Third Reich; with her clear voice and accent, she always had an edge in singing Weill's songs, and nothing holds her back here, not even Maurice Levine's orchestra; ends with several takes leading up to Louis Armstrong's hit version of "Mack the Knife." [9]

Lou Levy

Lou Levy: *Lunarcy* (1992, Verve/Gitanes) Piano trio plus Pete Christlieb on tenor sax. I'm used to Levy with Stan Getz; Christlieb has a heavier sound, a bit more aggressive -- I associate him with Warne Marsh, but he's very lucid here. Levy is sparkling. A very enjoyable session. [9]

George Lewis

George Lewis with Red Allen: *The Circle Recordings* (1951, American Music) Excellent trad jazz outing, with a couple of Allen vocals along with their usual fine instrumental work. [+]

George Lewis: *Jazz Funeral in New Orleans* (1953, Tradition -97) The great New Orleans clarinetist. His records were all pretty much the same, with many songs repeated from record to record. But this was a very good period for him, and this was an exemplary performance. I slightly prefer *The Beverly Cavern Sessions*, but not by a lot. [9]

George Lewis: *Ice Cream* (1953, Delmark -04) Among ancient New Orleans trumpeters, Buddy Bolden was an unrecorded legend and Freddie Keppard barely got his cup of coffee, but once Bunk Johnson got a new set of teeth in 1942, his comeback kicked off a revival of classic New Orleans jazz. The chief beneficiary of the revival was Johnson's clarinet player, the thin, unassuming George Lewis. Never more than a sideman in the old days, Lewis toured the world and recorded dozens of albums from the mid-'40s to his death in 1968. His was a music that had been frozen in time since Louis Armstrong's revolution, but that hardly detracts from the eloquence of his clarinet or the rousing good

cheer of his band. With so many records so fundamentally similar distinctions are subtle. This one was cut by Lewis' most typical group, and is a fine introduction to their art. Better still is *The Beverly Caverns Sessions* (Good Time Jazz), cut a month earlier with the same group: the clarinet a bit lighter, the trombone a bit heavier, the trumpet a bit more shiny, fewer vocals, marginal distinctions that somehow add up. [+]

George Lewis

B. 1952. Trombone.

George Lewis: *Changing With the Times* (1993, New World) Not promising: spoken voices with sound effects. But when you tune in, the words fascinate. And while the sound effects clang and clatter, in context they range from edgy background to something approaching momentum. [+]

John Lewis

John Lewis & Svend Asmussen: *European Encounter* (1962, Atlantic) This was a very nice match-up, with Asmussen's violin adding rich tone and depth to Lewis's stately piano and delicate songbook. I'd like to hear more of Asmussen. [+]

John Lewis: *Evolution* (1999, Atlantic) Solo piano, thoughtful takes on standards and esteemed MJQ pieces. He's never rocked, and certainly doesn't mean to start as he enters his 80s. [+]

Ramsey Lewis

The Ramsey Lewis Trio: *Sound of Christmas* (1961, Verve -04) There's nothing like Christmas music to bring out the "bah humbug!" in me, but if you really want to rub it in, toss in a string orchestra. The first half here, with just the trio, is tolerable, although I doubt that Charlie Parker could roast some of these chestnuts. The second half, with Riley Hampton's strings, is appalling hackwork. [1]

The Ramsey Lewis Trio: *At the Bohemian Caverns* (1964, Verve) Starts with an 11:38 medley from West Side Story, following up topically with "People," but the other side sticks closer to jazz and blues standards, the piano rarely takes the easy way out, and bassist Eldee Young works in some idiosyncratic soloing. [6]

The Ramsey Lewis Trio: *The In Crowd* (1965, Argo -07) Live set, headlined with his hit, the main concession to popular taste here is a willingness to get rowdy, especially with Eldee Young's shouts and Redd Holt's exuberant drums; cheap thrills, fun enough. [7]

Ramsey Lewis: *Goin' Latin* (1966, Verve -08): He doesn't go very far Latin: some bongos, Willie Bobo's "Spanish Grease," a samba; he mostly makes instrumental kitsch, the kind he occasionally scored novelty hits with, and he roughs the misses up enough to keep you from thinking he's a hack. [6]

Ramsey Lewis: *Love Songs* (1972-88, Columbia/Legacy -04) Without vocals how do you know they're love songs? with Nancy Wilson, why should you care? excepting a simple trio take on "Please Send Me Someone to Love," this offers nothing but tinkling piano in a sea of goop. [1]

Kirk Lightsey

Kirk Lightsey: *The Nights of Bradley's* (1985, Sunnyside -04) An excellent pianist, able to straddle avant-garde and mainstream without clearly aligning one way or another; this is a duo with bassist Rufus Reid, recorded at NYC's famous after-hours club; intimate and intelligent. [+]

Kirk Lightsey: *Everything Is Changed* (1986, Sunnyside) This is the only thing I have in Lightsey's name, although he shows up on many fine records in the avant-garde-meets-the-tradition spectrum. These are mostly bop-era pieces -- Parker, Monk, J.J. Johnson -- and the take on "Billie's Bounce" is revelatory: Jerry Gonzalez plays the riff and improves on thin (muted?) trumpet, much in the Parker mold, but Lightsey is working something different on piano -- more abstract, free even. The following piece is a change-of-pace ballad, but the juxtaposition (as opposed to the interplay) of Gonzalez and Lightsey sets the pace. A very engaging little record. [9]

Abbey Lincoln

Abbey Lincoln/Hank Jones: *When There Is Love* (1992, Verve) A jazz singer I've often had problems with -- voice too low, too slow, her early stuff (except Max Roach's *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*) too scattered -- but she wowed nearly everyone else, especially once she got to Verve in 1991; just singer and pianist here, and Jones provides the ideal mix of assurance and support, making her so comfortable for once she doesn't overreach. [7]

John Lindberg

John Lindberg Quintet: *Dimension 5* (1981, Black Saint -82) The String Trio of New York bassist expands his palette, working with Hugh Ragin on trumpet and Marty Ehrlich on alto sax and flute. The pieces are complex and abstract -- take some attention to follow, and don't always cohere. Bang is impressive on his solos, helpful otherwise. [+]

John Lindberg/Albert Mangelsdorff/Eric Watson: *Dodging Bullets* (1992, Black Saint) One of several records this trio has put together -- *Resurrection of a Dormant Soul*, with drummer Ed Thigpen added, is a favorite. This one is more low key, with the workload evenly divided and a lot of space between them. Lindberg is one of the most important bassists to have emerged since 1980. Watson is mostly known through his work with Steve Lacy. Mangelsdorff is one of the all-time legends on trombone -- here he gives us relatively straight play, which is expressive but doesn't go overboard (as he's been known to do). [+]

Arthur Lipner

Arthur Lipner: *The Magic Continues* (1993, Palmetto) Marimba, vibes, one cut with steel pans. Bob Ward is credited with "chuckles, grunts." Other credits include electric guitar, electric bass, keyboards. IOW, this roughly fits into the smooth jazz realm, although it is still attached to the post-bop jazz orbit. Light, mostly inoffensive. [4]

Charles Lloyd

Charles Lloyd: *Of Course, Of Course* (1964-65, Mosaic -06) On his second album, Lloyd opens with

flute over Gabor Szabo's sweet guitar, with Ron Carter and Tony Williams shuffling along. Lloyd's main instrument was tenor sax, and he soon garnered a following by taking Coltrane to the masses, but this album was more varied and idiosyncratic: his sax reminds me of Warne Marsh, but the flute suggests the more flamboyantly eccentric Roland Kirk, tuned more tightly to the melody, without the special effects. The reissue adds three later tracks, trying out an appealing tropic groove. [9]

Charles Lloyd: *Journey Within/In Europe* (1966-67, Collectables -98) Two more early albums crammed onto a single CD. Not a lot of coherency here, with Lloyd switching between tenor sax and flute, but he has a lot more on the flute than most of the saxophonists who so indulged. The pianist doesn't play a lot, but when he does he sounds like Keith Jarrett, a clear indication of a major stylist in the making. Drummer sounds like Jack DeJohnette, too. Bass player on the first album is Ron McClure; Cecil McBee takes over for the second. [+]

Charles Lloyd: *Just Before Sunrise* (1966-67, 32 Jazz -2CD -99) Two mid-'60s albums, with then-unknowns Keith Jarrett and Jack DeJohnette. Lloyd's sax is precise and pungent, pretty good; Lloyd's flute is flute. [7]

Charles Lloyd: *Notes From Big Sur* (1991, ECM -92) Quartet, with Bobo Stenson (piano), Anders Jormin (bass), Ralph Peterson (drums). Lloyd was a prominent player from 1964 up to roughly 1974, recording with Columbia, Atlantic, and A&M, but then mostly dropped from sight until ECM picked him up in 1989. This was his second ECM album, and there's been half-a-dozen or more since then -- including the wonderful *Voice in the Night*. This one, however, is so low key it's hard to get any grip on it. Thoughtful, pretty, some good piano by Stenson. [5]

Jon Lloyd

Jon Lloyd: *Four and Five* (1998, Hatology -99) Lloyd plays alto and soprano sax in a quartet with cello, bass and drums. I don't know much about him, but I like how the pulse runs though much of this, and how the cello contrasts with the sax. The exceptions don't confirm the rule -- they show that the rule was at most a first approximation. [9]

Giuseppi Logan

The Giuseppi Logan Quartet (1964, ESP) Logan is attributed a wide range of reeds, ranging from tenor sax to "Pakistani oboe," but this mostly sounds like alto. It's a rather listenable slice of '60s avant-garde-cum-exotica, where the most valuable player is no doubt percussionist Milford Graves. (Don Pullen is also on board, but very young and hardly recognizable.) [+]

Vesa-Matti Loiri

Vesa-Matti Loiri: *4+20* (1971, Porter -11) Finnish jazz and poetry bash, the leader playing flute and singing, sometimes cartoonishly, while piccolo, sax, guitar, and lots of percussion romp all around; label has done much to shed light on Finnish jazz notables such as Eero Koivistoinen and Pekka Sarmanto, and this is where that devotion winds up. [6]

Guy Lombardo

The Best of Guy Lombardo: The Early Years (1928-34, Collectors' Choice -02) Remembered mostly these days for "Auld Lang Syne," back in 1962 he was still remembered fondly enough by none other than Duke Ellington for tribute in his *Recollections of the Big Band Era*. Nothing here swings, but plenty of it sways, with some gems like "I'm Confessin' (That I Love You)" have the same sort of stately elegance that was part of Ellington's kit circa 1930. Almost everything here charted top-ten. Gets a bit less interesting toward the end. [+]

Guy Lombardo & His Royal Canadians: *The Band Played On* (1927-50, ASV -01) One of the most famous big bands of the swing era, although only rarely considered to be a jazz band at all -- note, though, that Duke Ellington called him out on *Recollections of the Big Band Era*. While swing is in short supply here, this genteel pop is not without its charms. This comp claims "25 Number One Hits," but it came out after a previous ASV comp which is noted here to contain two more Number One hits. No idea who's counting, or how. The one song most identified with him, "Auld Lang Syne," is elsewhere. Typical here are pieces like "Stars Fell on Alabama" and "Harbour Lights" -- songs too good to carp about. [5]

Julie London

The Best of Julie London: The Liberty Years (1955-64, EMI). She was a starlet, a pin-up who sang a little, and the songs mostly came out of that Great American Songbook that all the other starlets leaned on. Yet she remains astonishingly listenable: a voice that is clear and unmannered, friendly rather than coquettish, thoughtful. And she had impeccable taste in music: small jazz ensembles, sometimes just a guitar or smear of strings, or Nelson Riddle, the one big band maestro who was nimble enough to complement his singers rather than carpet bomb them. [9]

Time for Love: The Best of Julie London (1955-65, Rhino) Same period, only three duplicates, so much for consensus notions of what her best was. This one leans more to the slow stuff, which makes it breathier if not necessarily sexier. I slightly prefer the EMI compilation, but this comes very close. [9]

Frank Lowe

Frank Lowe: *Black Beings* (1973, ESP-Disk -08) The short middle piece is solo tenor sax, thoughtful and intriguing; the two long pieces sandwiched around the solo are screamers, with Joseph Jarman on second noisemaker, wailing and shrieking spastically around Lowe's meatier riffs. [4]

Frank Lowe: *The Loweski* (1973, ESP-Disk -12) A previously unreleased five-part jam recorded during the sessions that yielded the tenor saxophonist's debut, *Black Beings*. Joseph Jarman's soprano and alto provide contrasting variations in scratch and screech, while Wizard Raymond Lee Cheng's violin opens up space and offers some relief. A young bassist in one of his first recordings, William Parker, goes both ways. [6]

Mundell Lowe

Guitar Moods by Mundell Lowe (1956, Riverside/OJC -04) Shimmering curtains of sound, not ambient guitar so much as its precursor: ambling guitar. [5]

Jimmy Lyons

Jimmy Lyons: *The Box Set* (1972-85, Ayler -5CD -03) The Cecil Taylor Unit was led and dominated by the explosive pianist, but the melodic core of their work came from alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons, who played with Taylor from 1961 until shortly before he died in 1986. Lyons was a shy perfectionist who took Charlie Parker's idea (or was that Chairman Mao's) of perpetual revolution into realms Parker never imagined, but he recorded so rarely on his own that the only people who have ever heard of him are Cecil Taylor fanatics. This box won't change that, but five packed CDs of solos, trios, and quartets led by Lyons puts the man into much clearer focus than he's ever enjoyed before. The first disc, where he shares the front line with trumpeter Raphé Malik, is terrific fun. The last two spotlight Karen Borca's jazz bassoon, a sharp edged bottom to Lyons' alto. The rest is more educational: a deliberately paced solo session, a blisteringly fast trio, a revealing snatch of interview. Also, the booklet is invaluable. [9]

Machito

Machito and His Afro-Cubans: *Cubop City* (1949-50, Tumbao -92) Live shots from a half-dozen dates, with tinny sound and unattributed intros that sound like Symphony Sid of the Royal Roost and name guests on a few cuts -- Howard McGhee, Brew Moore, Flip Phillips; singers Machito and Graciela just go with the beat, but one of the trumpets really burns through -- Mario Bauza, I think. [+]

Machito and His Afro-Cubans: *Ritmo Caliente* (1941-51, Proper -4CD -05) Born Francisco Raúl Gutiérrez Grillo, probably in Havana, Cuba in 1908, moved to New York in 1937 and founded his big band, singing and playing maraccas, in 1940 with trumpeter Mario Bauza. The first disc here covers 1941-42 before he got drafted. The second disc picks him up in 1947 playing with Chano Pozo, and follows him through numerous live shots (Royal Roost, Birdland), running through a long list of singers and bouncing off such notable jazz musicians as Howard McGhee, Milt Jackson, Brew Moore, and Zoot Sims. Not as clear or consistent as his later 1951-57 *Mambo Mucho Mambo: The Complete Columbia Masters* (Columbia/Legacy), but important in its time, the flip-side to Dizzy Gillespie's Latin-leaning bebop. [7]

Machito: *Mambo Mucho Mambo: The Complete Columbia Masters* (1951-57, Columbia/Legacy -02) Machito and Mario Bauza were major figures in post-Cuban music, by which I mean the big band salsa that emerged in New York in the early post-WWII period. It's always been a bit difficult to listen to -- the rhythms are exciting, the horns are a mixed blessing, the vocals often leave something to be desired. The completeness includes a few things that I could do without, and the occasional bit of English doesn't help. But the first 3-4 cuts offer seminal grooves, and the rhythms rarely let up. As for the mambo obsession, that seems to be an affectation of the period, which gives it an agreeable quaintness, but I suspect that by the time Cuba was cleaved by revolution these guys were not merely happy exiles, they had already insinuated themselves into the yankee power structure. Not that that matters -- it's just music, after all. [8]

Machito and His Afro-Cuban Orchestra: *Vacation at the Concord* (1958, Verve -04) Polite, undistinguished mambos, just the thing for a weekend in the Catskills, affirming that Cuba was still the secure, well-behaved colonial outpost it had been since 1898. [4]

Kevin Mahogany

Kevin Mahogany: *My Romance* (1998, Warner Brothers) In a very, very, very mellow mood. [+]

Adam Makowicz

Adam Makowicz: *The Music of Jerome Kern* (1992, Concord) He has a reputation for Tatumesque excess, but the music here is so beguiling that the result is marvelously tasteful. [9]

Adam Makowicz: *My Favorite Things: The Music of Richard Rodgers* (1993, Concord) More of the same, but not as clear or sharp. [5]

Raphé Malik

Raphé Malik: *Last Set: Live at the 1369 Jazz Club* (1984, Boxholder -04) Cecil Taylor trumpeter Malik dukes it out with saxophonist Frank Wright over Syd Smart drums and amazing William Parker bass; the dominant mode here is joy -- so much fun that Wright tries to sing, so much fun you won't care that he sucks. [9]

Raphé Malik Quintet With Glenn Spearman: *Sirens Sweet & Slow* (1994, Out Sounds/Mapleshade) Malik plays trumpet. He was a Cecil Taylor protege going back to Antioch college days, and has a tremendously strong contribution on the first (1972) disc of the Jimmy Lyons *Box Set*. He recorded several times with Taylor later, and is hyped here as "Cecil Taylor's trumpet-player explores avant-garde lyricism." Still, the first piece here is mostly Spearman's doing, and I wax and wane with him. Next two pieces are trumpet duos, so Malik gets to let loose there. I like him a lot. [+]

Joe Maneri

Joe Maneri/Peter Dolger: *Peace Concert* (1964, Atavistic -09) An alto sax-drums free improv taped as part of "an all-night peace concert" at St. Peter's Church; interesting enough, cerebral with little flash, but short at 24:23; the record is padded out with Stu Vandermark's 2006 interview of a reticent Maneri, longer at 26:04, an extra you won't want to bother with twice and may not make it through once. [5]

Joe Maneri/Joe Morris/Mat Maneri: *Three Men Walking* (1995, ECM -96) Joe Maneri was in his 60s before he started to record regularly, with a dozen or more albums out since 1993. He mostly plays clarinet, but here appears as often on sax (alto, tenor), and a bit on piano. He's legendary as a microtonal theorist. AMG's list of similar artists is peculiar: Anton Webern, Alban Berg, Barre Phillips. Given his instruments, he sounds more like Joe McPhee, although that may be a bit superficial: both play difficult music, although the edge in difficulty no doubt goes to Maneri. Mat Maneri is Joe's son, a violinist who tends to play similarly difficult music, although he doesn't make much of it here. Joe Morris plays guitar, usually long lines of single notes in a style not all that far removed from bebop. The most striking thing about this record is that none of the musicians really play *with* each other: rather, aside from a little violin squeak in the background, most of this consists of one long, precise, delicate solo after another. One little bit that I like is the closer, where Joe Maneri plays piano, in a style that could be described as a more peaceable Cecil Taylor. Morris has some nice runs too. [5]

Albert Mangelsdorff

Albert Mangelsdorff Quartet: *Live in Tokyo* (1971, Enja -72) With Heinz Sauer (tenor sax), Günter Lenz (bass), and Ralph Hübner (drums). Cover has two alternate titles: "Diggin'" and "Live at Dug, Tokyo," but the spine prevails. Mangelsdorff is one of the legends in the German avant-garde, in European jazz more generally, and in the history of the trombone regardless of locale. What little I've heard of his early '70s work, when he was most prolific, tends to thrash about wildly, making for tough listening. This one isn't so bad, but it still has the flavor of how pungent his trombone can be. Also, his sense of sound, as on the second cut where he lays out long tones against which the sax cuts. [+]

Chuck Mangione

The Best of Chuck Mangione (1973-88, Columbia/Legacy -04) All but two cuts come from Mangione's spell with Columbia from 1982-88, comprising five albums which the usually generous AMG rates from one to two stars. The other two come from a 1973 Mercury album and a 1977 A&M single. The 1973 cut is the 12:24 "Land of Make Believe," with an Esther Satterfield vocal and a sizable orchestra. The 1977 cut is "Feel So Good," his trademark pop hit. Don't know how much more there is to his many Mercury and A&M albums, but the Columbia cuts are thick and dull even with his horn, which has no dimension beyond bright. [2]

Shelly Manne

The Best of Shelly Manne (1953-61, Contemporary -04) One of the few drummers to make the transitions from big band swing to bebop to Ornette without the slightest hitch, Manne's drumwork was inconspicuous but his ability to drive a band, keeping them light and fleet but together, was uncanny; with the leader in the background this sampler seems more arbitrary than most, starting points on paths worth pursuing separately, but together a quick glimpse of the diversity of the music Manne was most identified with -- west coast cool. [9]

Shelly Manne: *2-3-4* (1962, Impulse -94) The definitive west coast drummer in duo, trio and quartet pieces -- the latter lifted to jazz heaven by Coleman Hawkins. [9]

Shelly Manne: *Steps to the Desert* (1962, Contemporary -04) Subtitled "modern jazz versions of favorite Jewish and Israeli songs," the jazz isn't all that impressive, nor are the songs. Teddy Edwards and Victor Feldman (at least on vibes) play competently enough, but one suspects a general lack of purpose, or lackadaisicalness. [4]

Joe Maphis

Joe Maphis: *Fire on the Strings* (1955-59, Columbia/Legacy -01) If western swing had continued to develop as jazz, Maphis might be Wes Montgomery, and this might be *So Much Guitar*. [+]

Dodo Marmarosa

A Proper Introduction to Dodo Marmarosa: Dodo's Dance (1946-48, Proper -04) A fair selection of work by a minor pianist of the bebop era, which elevate a notch when joined by tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson. [+]

Rick Margitza

Rick Margitza: *Heart of Hearts* (1999, Palmetto -00) With Joey Calderazzo (piano), Scott Colley (bass), and Ian Froman (drums). Margitza (tenor/soprano sax) is pretty much the definition of mainstream today: while his albums don't break new ground, they manage to sound right yet feel fresh. I particularly like a couple of them -- *Work It* (1994, Steeplechase) and *Hands of Time* (1994, Challenge) -- but the fact is that he never disappoints. Not this time either, although there is also nothing here that really delights me either: the fast ones kick up a cloud of dust which is impressive at the moment but less so once it settles out, while the slow ones don't quite have as much personality as I'd like. Among mainstream saxists, the reigning voice these days is Bennie Wallace, who seems to be getting slower each time out. Margitza isn't ready for that, yet. [+]

Branford Marsalis

Branford Marsalis: *Requiem* (1998, Columbia -99) Having a hard time with this one, perhaps a generic problem, since I always like his records, yet always reluctant to push one above B+. Not a breakthrough so much as an accident, the record left unfinished by Kenny Kirkland's death. [9]

Branford Marsalis: *The Steep Anthology* (1983-98, Columbia/Legacy -04) Hipper, less ambitious, more fun than his famous little brother, perhaps because the legacy of respected sax is broader and more adventurous than for trumpet, and because he gets a distinct sound on soprano when he invokes Bechet; still, not an especially well chosen or programmed comp. [5]

Warne Marsh

Warne Marsh & Lee Konitz: *Two Not One* (1975, Storyville 4CD -09) Lennie Tristano's two most famous disciples on their first visit to Denmark, playing three nights at Montmartre in Copenhagen in early December and a fourth just after Christmas, plus a couple of studio sessions. Some feature tenor saxophonist Marsh in trio and quartet settings, but most add Konitz's slippery alto sax for a quintet. Storyville has been dipping into these tapes for years, but the effect of piling them up is cumulative, especially as they plot their own paths through well worn standards. [9]

Clare Martin

Every Now and Then: The Very Best of Claire Martin (1991-2000, Linn -01) Cool-toned British jazz songstress, highly touted by the Penguin Guide, but in two previous attempts I have yet to connect to her work. This divvies up songs from seven albums. I don't get this one either, although I do like "Chased Out" and "Off Beat" -- the former from the better of the two records I've heard. But then I may just be trying to tune in on the jazzier bands, and that may not be the point with her. One thing I am pretty sure of is that this loses more in consistency and flow by jumping around than it gains by picking up blow-away songs. There just aren't any. [5]

Dean Martin

Dino: The Essential Dean Martin (1949-69, Capitol -04) His associations with Jerry Lewis and Frank Sinatra made him look second-rate, and on his own he lapsed into a celebrity caricature of his

notoriously drunken self. Lewis and Sinatra were geniuses -- nobody could compete with them, and Martin never tried. What made him the greatest second banana of the era was that he could toss off a brilliant performance so effortlessly that even artists like Lewis and Sinatra had to admire him, but he was so self-effacing about it that he never threatened to become a challenger. You figured him for lazy, but that's just because he was such a natural. Having changed his name from Dino Crocetti, he had to wrestle "Mambo Italiano" back from Rosemary Clooney, but nowadays it's almost impossible to eat linguine without hearing "Nel Blu di Pinto di Blu" in the background. When I was a teenager his songs were essential philosophy: "You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You" was the ultimate question, and "Everybody Loves Somebody" the answer. He got me through the worst years of my life. [10]

Pat Martino

Pat Martino: *Alone Together With Bobby Rose* (1977-78, High Note -12) Pre-aneurism, previously unreleased, Rose adds a second guitar but is more rhythm accompaniment than duet partner. [6]

Hugh Masekela

Hugh Masekela: *Grrr* (1966, Verve -03) Expat South African trumpet player seeks good township groove, but it takes a while for the anonymous band to get the idea; when they do this swoops and soars and rolls right past the injustices of the day, which are many. [+]

Hugh Masekela: *Home Is Where the Music Is* (1972, Verve -08): Runs 76:33, a double LP fit onto a single CD; his ex-home is South Africa, and the more he looks back the harder he charges forward, eventually erupting in a well-earned vocal; some Americans in the band take a while to catch on, but saxophonist Dudu Pukwana is perfectly at home. [9]

Bennie Maupin

Bennie Maupin: *The Jewel and the Lotus* (1974, ECM) Plays "reeds" which sounds like a sneaky way to slip the flute in, although soprano sax and bass clarinet are also featured in his toolkit; best known for headhunting fusion with Herbie Hancock, who returns the favor here, but this is an early exercise in ECM pastorella, what New Age would be if brains or guts were required. [5]

Tommy McCook

Tommy McCook: *Down in Bond Street* (1966-68, Trojan -97) Reggae instrumentals, which in a music renowned for its samey-ness tends to push its luck. Most of it is quite listenable in a very non-intrusive way; what does intrude isn't the samey-ness but the overfamiliarity of some of the melodies: "Ode to Billy Joe," for instance, flows nicely, but the born-to-queasy-listening "What the World Needs Now" doesn't. [5]

Tommy McCook: *Blazing Horns/Tenor in Roots* (1978-80, Blood & Fire -03) The most famous of all Jamaican saxophonists, McCook was a mainstay of the Skatalites and a studio workhorse. These cuts come from sessions produced by Yabby You, Glenmore Brown, and (one cut) Striker Lee, and have been mixed by King Tubby. The first batch (for Yabby You) include Sly and Robbie, Albert Griffiths and Ansel Collins; don't know about the others. All instrumentals, most with that distinctive dub sound.

The titles leave something to be desired: nothing blazing here, just insouciant grooves; not roots either, just state-of-the-art dub. [+]

Susannah McCorkle

Susannah McCorkle: *The Songs of Johnny Mercer* (1977, Jazz Alliance -96) Her first album, the first of many songwriter specials, and as good a place to begin as any. She was a literateur, devoted to the words like a latter day Carmen McRae, but she fell in with good musicians from the start, and virtually built today's jazz vocal vogue. The musicians here were more trad than her collaborators at Concord: Keith Ingham (piano) and Digby Fairweather (cornet) are the best known names. [+]

Susannah McCorkle: *Most Requested Songs* (1977-2000, Concord -01) McCorkle is credited with selecting the material here and as coproducer with Nick Phillips. But my recollection is that this appeared after her death (suicide), which occurred after Concord decided not to release (record?) a new album by her that year, and after she lost an accustomed cabaret gig. So to my mind this comp is marred by bad timing. But is it at least useful? Not clear. Most of her albums were composer songbooks, and they tend to have an underlying unity that gets lost in trying to span them all. She was a very clean, clear, purposeful singer. She treated each song she touched with great respect, and often did it justice. Her career with Concord ensured that she would work with first rate, highly sympathetic musicians. The main consequence of this was that she enjoyed a career of high competency if not a lot of inspiration or idiosyncrasy. [+]

Jack McDuff

Jack McDuff: *The Prestige Years* (1960-65, Prestige -04) Dependably funky on the Hammond B3, Brother Jack cranked out 23 albums in a six year stretch with Prestige. Nothing extraordinary here, but he was one of the workhorses of the soul jazz era. He was usually paired with a guitarist (Kenny Burrell, George Benson) and/or saxophone (Gene Ammons, Jimmy Forrest, Red Holloway, Harold Vick), and his high points often depended on his partners. My own favorite is *Kirk's Work*, with a young Roland Kirk (not yet Rahsaan), but that's another label. [+]

Bobby McFerrin

Bobby McFerrin: *Simple Pleasures* (1988, EMI-Manhattan) This leads off with his hit, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." I've never hated the song, but there isn't a lot to it. Aside from five originals, this is thickly larded with covers, including "Drive My Car," "Good Lovin'," "Suzie Q," and "Sunshine of Your Love." Sounds like it's just overdubbed vocals, which leaves it feeling scrawny -- the Mills Brothers had more voices, not to mention a guitar. So simple's no lie. Pleasure is another story: "Drive My Car" is the only one of the covers which is such a surefire joke that the reduction here comes off as corny. That's worth a smile, but that's about it. [2]

Chris McGregor

Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath: *Travelling Somewhere* (1973, Cuneiform -01) McGregor's South African jazz band, the Blue Notes, escaped the land of Apartheid to a festival in Europe in 1964 and never returned. In Europe the South Africans fell in with the avant-garde, and

McGregor expanded his band to include more horns, including Evan Parker, Mike Osborne, and Malcolm Griffiths. The expanded band was called the Brotherhood of Breath -- with three trumpets, two trombones, and four saxes, it's easy to hear why. They had a lot of breath, and their recordings were dominated by multiple horns weaving in and out, making an exhilarating, riotous din. But they also had a lot of rhythm: their pieces were built from South African folk and pop figures, and they tend to keep the rhythm up regardless of how freely the horns wander. Compared to the more recently released 2CD *Bremen to Bridgwater*, this one has the advantage of sticking a bit closer to the framework, led off by Dudu Pukwana's marvelous "MRA." [9]

Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath: *Bremen to Bridgwater* (1971-75, Cuneiform -2CD -04) More South African themes launch even more avant improvisations as the global unity of Europe's most radical musicians gets serious and has fun. [+]

Ken McIntyre

Makanda Ken McIntyre: *In the Wind: The Woodwind Quartets* (1995-96, Passin' Thru) McIntyre plays everything, overdubbing four part harmonies using various clusters of related instruments: clarinets, flutes, double reeds, saxophones. As you might guess, only the saxophones have any bite -- perhaps because that's what McIntyre normally plays. Especially with the flutes and clarinets, the harmony doesn't amount to much, and the melodic divergences are slight. And in each cluster of instruments the lack of contrasting color amounts to white-out (or looking at the back cover, maybe pink-out). This description probably sounds abysmal, but mostly I'm annoyed by a very talented saxophonist indulging a patently bad idea. Were I not so annoyed, I'd point out that parts of this do grow on you, much like minimalism lowers our standards to the point where we can appreciate minor details. [3]

John McLaughlin

John McLaughlin: *Electric Guitarist* (1978, Columbia) He has a tremendously distinctive sound, but these occasional pieces with a ramshackle assortment of collaborators don't really go anywhere with it. [5]

John McLaughlin/Al DiMeola/Paco DeLucia: *Passion Grace & Fire* (1982, Columbia -83) Three guitarists: one Spanish, one American but specializing in Spanish-tinged music, one Brit who draws influences from the world over. All acoustic, they make a thick racket of plucked strings. At several points I was on the verge of dismissing this, but they always managed to snap out of it somehow. Usually with something snappy. [5]

John McLaughlin and Mahavishnu: *Adventures in Radioland* (1986, Verve -93) A power group, with Bill Evans (saxes, keybs), Mitchell Forman (keybs), Jonas Hellborg (bass guitar), Danny Gottlieb (drums), Abraham Wechter (acoustic guitar). McLaughlin plays electric guitar and guitar synth. First cut is built around pumped organ chords. Second one sounds like it was lifted from Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. In other words, this isn't a band that relies on subtlety or finesse. The keybs in general are awful -- the sound cheesy, with little rhythmic flair or self-discipline. Evans' sax is derivative. The final cut catches McLaughlin doing what he does best, but by then it's too little too late. [3]

John McLaughlin Trio: *Live at the Royal Festival Hall* (1989, JMT) McLaughlin plays acoustic

guitar and Photon guitar synth, Kai Eckhardt electric bass, Trilok Gurtu percussion. I have a lot of McLaughlin albums to wade through, but this strikes me as much of what I'm looking for in him, at least in his later years: this is still a pretty intense album; even though he's often on acoustic, the electric bass and forthright percussion keep things moving. A piece of scat toward the end is neither here nor there. [+]

Time Remembered: John McLaughlin Plays Bill Evans (1993, Verve) With the Aigietta Quartet providing four more acoustic guitars -- I gather that they're a classical music group -- as if McLaughlin's isn't enough, and Yan Maresz on "acoustic bass guitar." I never recognize Evans' songs when I hear them, even though I recognize most of these titles. The overall mood is lush and romantic, which is a common take on Evans' famed sentimentality, although I've never managed to hear Evans' music that way. Transcribing these pieces to guitar almost sounds like they're being played on harpsichord -- an uncommonly resonant one, but they still ring out in distinct notes. Pretty, but the notes more so than the assembled music, which doesn't do much. [4]

John McLaughlin: *The Promise* (1995, Verve) I've played this a few times, and it seems all over the map. There is a long list of featured musicians, but they are usually deployed in small, discrete groups. The first cut, "Django" (John Lewis) is typical Mahavishnu, with Jeff Beck adding guitar. "Thelonious Melodius" is a trio dominated by Joey DeFrancesco's Hammond B-3, and it's fine, too. A very brief verse from Dante -- the first of several. A short piece with guitar over synth. A duet with DeFrancesco playing trumpet with unspecified percussion -- McLaughlin's keyboards? Nice, sorta boppish piece. Then a Spanish theme called "El Ciego," with Paco DeLucia and Al DiMeola -- rather lukewarm as those things go. We can think of the next piece, "Jazz Jungle," as the centerfold: 14:45 long, a fairly straightforward jazz sextet with Michael Brecker conspicuous on tenor sax, McLaughlin doing his electric guitar thing, and a rhythm section of Jim Beard (keybs), James Genus (electric bass), Dennis Chambers (drums), and Don Alias (percussion). It's a fruitful pairing, but I find it a bit cold; despite all his chops, Brecker has never made me want to listen to him, and that's certainly part of it -- imagine the same thing with, say, Roland Kirk, and even without a stray whistle or siren it's easy to see that Brecker comes up short. But at this length it also falls into pointless jam mode, and the chuckle at the end just confirms it. Next piece goes to the Indian connection: Zakir Hussain (tabla), Nishat Khan (sitar), Trilok Gurtu (percussion). The midlife crisis is getting clearer, as we're recapitulating McLaughlin's life story -- unfortunately, without Miles to call some of the shots. "English Jam" is McLaughlin on noisy electric guitar, Sting on bass, and Vinnie Colaiuta on drums. Short, as is the synth beats on "Tokyo Decadence" and the Zen Haiku. Then we get the "Jazz Jungle" group back, subbing David Sanborn for Brecker. This is, not surprisingly, much lamer than the piece with Brecker. Finally, we get "The Peacocks" -- the Jimmy Rowles ballad, with McLaughlin and Philippe Loli on acoustic guitar and Yann Maresz on acoustic bass guitar. Pretty, delicate. Finally a word or two from Garcia Lorca. And that's it: all over the map. It does sound better when you tear it apart piece by piece, but we don't generally listen to albums like that -- with the booklet open, and a ready cross-reference to the artist's complete works. There's good stuff here, but it also strikes me that most of the recapitulations that I'm most familiar with come up a bit short. So does the overall experience. [5]

Chris McGregor

Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath: *Eclipse at Dawn* (1971, Cuneiform -08) A band of South African exiles with their township jive melodies, doubled to big band strength with English avant-

gardists, the sounds repressed by apartheid amplified into the cacophonous noise of freedom; a live set from Berlin, not the clearest or the most exhilarating of performances, but a remarkable band. [6]

John McLaughlin

John McLaughlin/Jaco Pastorius/Tony Williams: *Trio of Doom* (1979, Columbia/Legacy -07) A faint record of a lost opportunity, a dream trio assembled for a rare State Department-sponsored show in Havana, nicknamed "the bay of gigs"; the trio's slice of the released *Havana Jam* had to be recut in a New York studio, but McLaughlin has finally salvaged the original tapes; no revelations: the guitar comes through strong, the bass remains an enigma. [6]

Jackie McLean

Jackie McLean: *McLean's Scene* (1956-57, Prestige) McLean's Prestige records are generally disparaged. At the time, Prestige specialized in cheapie jam sessions, which worked fine for players like Gene Ammons and Eddie Davis, and magnificently for Coleman Hawkins, but evidently wasn't enough of a challenge for younger players like John Coltrane and McLean -- both of whom exploded as soon as they went elsewhere. Nonetheless, this one is a rich tableau of blues and be-bop, with McLean's distinctive pinched sound in place, and a stellar sideman crew having fun. [9]

The Best of Jackie McLean (1956-57, Prestige -04) McLean appeared in Ken Burns' *Jazz* documentary, but only to talk about Charlie Parker, and most of the stories made McLean out to be nothing more than Parker's go-fer. McLean was very young when he was chasing Bird, but he was hardly an imitator. From the start, as shown by this useful sampler of a half-dozen Prestige quickies, he was slower and bluesier than Parker, with a tone uniquely his own. Nothing here qualifies as important, at least not compared to his later work on Blue Note, where he quickly emerged as faster and even riskier than Ornette Coleman -- so much so that when the two of them did an album together Ornette retreated to trumpet. But Burns isn't the only one who sells McLean short. *Downbeat* keeps a Hall of Fame which has not only bypassed him thus far -- McLean's name isn't even on the ballot. Which makes him something like the most underrated jazz musician of all time. [PS: McLean finally got on the ballot the year he died, and won in a landslide.] [9]

Jackie McLean: *Capuchin Swing* (1960, Blue Note) Not much more than a throwback to McLean's little-appreciated Prestige jam sessions: add Blue Mitchell up front, and a first-rate rhythm section. But McLean shines anyway. [+]

Jackie McLean: *Destination . . . Out!* (1963, Blue Note) One of McLean's most adventurous records, yet subtle and eminently listenable, with major roles for Grachan Moncur III (trombone and principal writer) and Bobby Hutcherson (vibes). [9]

Jackie McLean: *It's Time* (1964, Blue Note -06) The alto saxist set his destination for out the year before; this group is more rooted in hard bop, but McLean pushes them hard, even getting some abstract comping from Herbie Hancock; the newcomer is trumpeter Charles Tolliver, who writes three pieces, including the soft closer. [8]

Jackie McLean: *Action* (1964, Blue Note -04) A minor masterpiece, showcasing young avant trumpeter Charles Tolliver, who wrote two pieces, and a rhythm section with Bobby Hutcherson that whips McLean into fine shape. [9]

Jackie McLean: *Right Now!* (1965, Blue Note) McLean's Blue Note recordings from 1959-67 are an extraordinary series, whether he be pushing the avant-garde envelope (*New Soil, Freedom Now, Destination . . . Out!*) or just enjoying the groove (*Swing Swang Swingin'*). This one sits midway: by 1965 McLean had incorporated Ornette as thoroughly as he had Parker, and was making easy music from both. Maybe too easy, but quite an accomplishment. [9]

Jackie McLean: *Jacknife* (1965, Blue Note) Judging from Ken Burns' jazz documentary, you might be under the impression that Jackie McLean was little more than Charlie Parker's go-fer. The fact is that McLean is an all-time alto sax great, and while he started out in thrall to Parker, he really emerged on his own around 1960 when hearing Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane loosened him up. Albums like *New Soil* (1959) and *Let Freedom Ring* (1962) were landmarks, and this album is a welcome addition. McLean alternates two trumpets here, little known Charles Tolliver and hard bop legend Lee Morgan. By far the most interesting piece here is Tolliver's "On the Nile," where a stately middle eastern theme is chopped up and stretched out, the rhythm offset, making way for magnificent solos. But the rest could use more McLean and less trumpet, even though Morgan is spectacular on "Climax." [+]

Jackie McLean: *Consequence* (1965, Blue Note -05) From a period when McLean more often leaned avant, but this is a straight hard bop bowing session, starting with one called "Bluesanova" -- more blues than nova; minor in terms of the leader, but fans of Lee Morgan and Harold Mabern will be pleased. [6]

Jackie McLean: *New and Old Gospel* (1967, Blue Note -07) Charlie Parker's teenage go-fer developed as a great alto saxophonist only after he digested Ornette Coleman's sense of ordered chaos; here he pays tribute on two gospel-themed Coleman pieces, adding a complementary suite; Coleman, in turn, defers to McLean's superior saxmanship by switching to sloppy trumpet, reaffirming that genius has nothing to do with chops. [9]

Jackie McLean: *Demon's Dance* (1967, Blue Note -06) The last of McLean's Blue Notes is a bright, breezy, bop quintet with newcomers Woody Shaw and Jack DeJohnette standing out -- the sort of quickie he made routinely a decade earlier at Prestige, but with his mastery all the more evident. [8]

Big Jay McNeely

Big Jay McNeely: *Nervous* (1949-59, Saxophile -95) A tenor saxman with a honking bold sound but not much finesse and no interest in bebop filigree, McNeely blasted the jukeboxes in the 1950s, with occasional hits but no real albums to speak of. Someone with access to the scattered scraps could put a terrific 2-CD sampler together, maybe even a Proper 4-CD Box. Rhapsody has six reissues up dated 2009, labeled Jay McNeely Masters, but I haven't found them anywhere for sale. In any case, I picked this one because it matches a compilation I could find a little discographical information on, and it turns out to be a fair sample of his work: 19 cuts, 6 live, a couple alternates. A few have vocals and "Roadhouse Boogie" turns on inspired wicked sharp jive. The live "Body and Soul" was so uninteresting that McNeely wandered into another melody, but his jump blues are really acrobatic, and most of the album burns white hot. [8]

Jim McNeely

Jim McNeely at Maybeck (Maybeck Recital Hall Series, Volume Twenty) (1992, Concord) Two

originals, seven standards -- "Body and Soul," "All the Things You Are," Jobim, Powell, two Monks, Harry Warren -- each given immensely satisfying readings. Mostly strong in rhythm, two hands making full use of the keyboard. I usually find solo piano thin, arch, underdressed; no such complaints here. [9]

Marian McPartland

Marian McPartland: *Timeless* (1952-53, Savoy -02) English pianist (1918-2013), studied classical music but left for vaudeville, entertaining troops during the war, marrying dixieland cornetist Jimmy McPartland on a military base, moved to Chicago and on to New York where she cut these early solo and trio sides; all standards, something she already shows a flair for. [7]

Marian McPartland: *Piano Jazz With Guest Teddy Wilson* (1978, The Jazz Alliance -05) Of course, it's ridiculous trying to rate records like this. This is one of McPartland's "Piano Jazz" radio programs, where she talks shop with a guest, plays a little piano, has the guest play, does a duet or two -- almost everything is improvised on the spot. She's been doing this since 1978 -- no telling how many of these programs she's done, but AMG lists 32 titles up to 2002. That's when Concord slashed their back catalog. Since then Concord redesigned the artwork and has started reissuing select old titles, like this one, plus a few new ones, like Elvis Costello and Bruce Hornsby. Those numbers suggest that they try to be selective about what they release -- there must be hundreds of interviews to choose from. However, given the format, this is the sort of thing that can be fascinating to hear once, but inevitably becomes distracting to replay. To a large extent, grading records is an attempt to estimate how much future replay pleasure they may hold. How valuable these are depends not just on who the guest is, but on how curious you are about the guest; given how technical the conversation can turn, it may depend on whether your curiosity is also technical. That's the sort of thing I can't evaluate at all, so I tend to grade these things within a relatively narrow band. Turning to this particular show, from McPartland's first season, the obvious point is that Wilson is one of the most important jazz pianists ever, but also that he is a very deliberate and studious performer. He talks a good deal about Benny Carter, who first hired him, and Art Tatum, who he was close to before they both moved to New York. He also talks about John Hammond, Fats Waller, some guy named Horowitz who plays classical music. He doesn't talk about Billie Holiday, whose name currently resides on many records that originally came out under his name, and he doesn't bite on any of the bait McPartland throws out about his skills as an accompanist. All that is interesting, as is the piano. I'm glad I heard it. I'm also glad I didn't have to pay for it, even though at \$11.98 list the label meets you part way. And I doubt that I'll play it again, unless I have some specific research to do. [6]

Marian McPartland: *Portrait of Marian McPartland* (1979, Concord) Good mainstream session, with her trio plus Jerry Dodgion on saxophone and flute -- the latter put to particularly good effect. [+]

Marian McPartland: *Personal Choice* (1982, Concord) One of the great jazz pianists of our era, but just a typical (i.e., perfectly fine) session. [+]

Marian McPartland: *Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Volume Nine* (1991, Concord) Solo piano again, except that the tradition is her bag (two originals here). She picks a couple of unusual things here -- Ellington, of course, but also a Brubeck piece called "The Duke," and "Turn Around" by Ornette Coleman. Takes them at a fairly leisurely pace, and hides the obvious melodies. [+]

Marian McPartland: *In My Life* (1993, Concord) Took a brief break from her *Piano Jazz* albums to hear some real music. Her trio swings easily on a range of tunes from Alec Wilder to Ornette Coleman,

but most of the record is taken over by guest Chris Potter, who has rarely sounded better. [9]

Joe McPhee

Joe McPhee Quartet: *Underground Railroad* (1968-69, Atavistic -2CD -01) His first album, limited to 500 copies on CJR Records, here greatly expanded with the earlier but previously unreleased "Live at Holy Cross Monastery"; the album, inspired by the previous century's escape from slavery, tingles with excitement, especially when McPhee switches from tenor sax to piercing trumpet; the live tape, with two extra players, sounds fainter and takes longer to come together, which it does in a smashing drum solo. [9]

Joe McPhee: *Nation Time* (1970, Atavistic -00) The 18:28 title cut is a black power funk classic, egged on by an MC shouting "what time is it?" and the horns pronouncing revolution. Then the second side starts with a powerhouse organ-driven polyphonic funk number called "Shakey Jake" and closes with a band jam called "Scorpio's Dance" -- a step down in power and forward in improv. McPhee, who plays both trumpet and tenor sax here, has had a long and wonderful career as the most determinedly rigorous of avant musicians, so I don't think he ever did anything like this again. [10]

Joe McPhee: *Trinity* (1971, Atavistic -00) Mike Kull's piano exudes Sun Ra space vibes while drummer Harold E. Smith keeps busy; McPhee works in patches, favoring tenor sax over trumpet, rising to a powerful climax, but more often working in a subtler vein. [+]

Joe McPhee: *Survival Unit II With Clifford Thornton N.Y. N.Y. 1971* (1971, Hatology -06) An early live shot that came out much after the fact, McPhee plays trumpet and tenor sax, with Thornton on baritone horn, Byron Morris on soprano and alto sax, Mike Kull on piano, and Harold Smith on percussion -- no bass to hold such taut music together; impressive work by the headliners, but the soprano can get whiney, and the length (78:45) adds up to a bit much. [8]

Joe McPhee/John Snyder: *Pieces of Light* (1974, Atavistic -05) Snyder's synthesizer experiments rarely rise beyond the level of playing with toys, but McPhee throws everything he has against them, with his trumpet and tenor sax making the strongest impressions; this is the fourth of McPhee's early CJR recordings John Corbett's admirable series has rescued. [6]

Joe McPhee Po Music: *Linear B* (1990, Hat Art -91) McPhee is one of the most rigorous and inventive voices in free jazz. This is a fascinating session, mostly fractured yet here and there it comes together with elegance and/or beauty (as in the final "Voices"). McPhee dabbles with electronics, plays soprano sax, and quite a bit of flugelhorn or pocket trumpet, a nice change which works especially well given that he has two compatible reed players on hand, Urs Leimgruber and most significantly André Jaume. Two guitarists as well: Jaume's sidekick Raymond Boni and the always interesting Christy Doran; plus bass (Leon Francioli) and drums (Fritz Hauser). [9]

Joe McPhee/Lisle Ellis/Paul Plimley: *Sweet Freedom -- Now What?* (1994 [2008], Hatology): As resolute a believer in freedom as anyone can be, yet McPhee's sax as well as clarinet is underwhelming here, balanced to give his partners (bass and piano, respectively) equal time and access, an opportunity which Plimley, at least, makes the best of. [7]

Joe McPhee/Ken Vandermark/Kurt Kessler: *A Meeting in Chicago* (1996, Okkadisk -98) From John Corbett's liner notes: "There weren't more than six of us in the audience that night, nor the next, but among the few others to brave the storm was Ken Vandermark's father. Stu Vandermark has long

been one of Beantown's most astute listeners and a dedicated free-music gadfly. In fact, I met him long before I did his son, though Ken and I are roughly the same age. Ken first heard McPhee through his dad, who hipped him to the superb solo record *Tenor* . . . That music had a transformative influence on Vandermark-the-younger; Ken was awed by McPhee's ability to sustain free-flowing, hard-blowing energy and at the same time effectively deal with elegance, lyricism and melodicism -- a seemingly incompatible compound of materials." I quote this because I hadn't read anything like this before -- although I've read an essay by Stu Vandermark on the Okkadisk website, which fits this quote to a tee. Also because I think fathers, family, and childhood friends sort of set some parameters that limit or extend one's own adult options -- and without going down other ratholes, this sort of explains KV's relationship to the free jazz tradition, which has elements of awe and humility in addition to its usual historical-pedagogic value. As for this particular meeting, it took place 11 years after Corbett's hurricane. The *Penguin Guide* regards this as "extraordinary," but I've never been very comfortable with it. The thirteen pieces here are parceled out: three trios, McPhee solo, Vandermark/Kessler, Kessler solo, McPhee/Vandermark (twice), three trios, Vandermark solo, McPhee/Kessler. [5]

Joe McPhee Quartet: *Legend Street One* (1996, CIMP) Two horns, with McPhee's arsenal (most notably, his pocket trumpet) squared off against Frank Lowe's tenor sax. David Prentice plays violin, so no bass. Charles Moffett drums. The music is decidedly abstract, as if often the case with McPhee. Violin doesn't come through very clearly, but the two horns are combustible. [+]

Carmen McRae

Carmen McRae: *Live at the Flamingo Jazz Club London May 1961* (1961, Acrobat -08) Barely accompanied by Don Abney's piano trio, eleven standards from "I Could Write a Book" to "They Can't Take That Away From Me," including obvious stops like "Stardust" and "Body and Soul" and the local nod "A Foggy Day (in London Town)," given readings at once textbook proper and delectable. [6]

Carmen McRae/Betty Carter: *The Carmen McRae-Betty Carter Duets* (1987, Verve -06) Live at the Great American Music Hall, San Francisco, two very different singers even though their voices are closely matched, backed by a piano trio with Eric Danielson; McRae holds Carter to standards, but Carter won't leave them that way, and McRae gets a mischievous kick out of the liberty. [7]

Carmen McRae: *Carmen Sings Monk* (1988, RCA Bluebird -01) A singer renowned for her studious fidelity to the lyric sheet, in many ways the polar opposite of Jon Hendricks, who wrote seven of thirteen lyrics here -- or more accurately, slapped them on the sides of bebop riffs like hit-and-run graffiti. McRae doesn't do Hendricks justice; she does him a big favor, not so much taking the words seriously as tucking them so neatly back into Monk's bent tunes newbies may not realize how out of joint they are. Also helps that the band, including the redoubtable Charlie Rouse -- Monk's main man on tenor sax -- handles the music with the proper respect. [9]

Carmen McRae: *Sarah: Dedicated to You* (1990, RCA Bluebird -03) Sarah Vaughan, of course -- McRae never had a problem looking up to the other greats because she was too modest and proper to be one herself. Nothing here by Vaughan, none of her trademark phrasing or scat. Even the songs I know from Vaughan I know just as well from others, so while the tribute is sincere, this could just as well be McRae's own show, and really it is, not least because she's managed to clean up all the ego and fetishism that made Sassy so difficult and annoying. By the way, the exceptionally talented pianist who holds this together is Shirley Horn, who declined to sing. [8]

Jay McShann

Jay McShann Orchestra: *Blues From Kansas City* (1941-43, Decca -92) Front cover says, "Featuring Charlie Parker & Walter Brown"; Brown is the singer, a classic blues shouter; McShann plays piano, had a long career on the blues circuit after his territory band went bust; Parker doesn't mess up much. [9]

Jack McVea

Jack McVea: *McVoutie's Central Avenue Blues* (1945, Delmark -02) McVea's saxophone just the unifying concept for this collection of vintage r&b obscurities. Most cuts have singers (mostly the serviceable Rabon Tarrant, two cuts with Wynonie Harris). [+]

John Medeski

Medeski, Martin & Wood: *Friday Night in the Universe* (1994, Gramavision -95) They developed into a pretty good funk band, but this relatively early effort doesn't clearly resolve itself -- some organ funk, some piano, some things that might be worth salvaging (there's a best-of on the shelf here somewhere). [5]

Medeski, Martin & Wood: *Combustication* (1998, Blue Note) Mild-mannered organ funk, with a few things to like: the scratches that fill out "Church of Logic", the beat rap on early bebop days in "Whatever Happened to Gus." [+]

Misha Mengelberg

Misha Mengelberg/Han Bennink: *Eine Partie Tischtennis* (1974, FMP) Dutch piano-percussion duo, hooked up in the mid-1960s and have been inseparable ever since; the pianist flirts with boogie but prefers a sharp attack, especially on the high keys; the drummer will attack anything, with logs and woodblocks among his more common victims; too sharp, shrill, and loud to really enjoy, but it does rivet your attention. [6]

Misha Mengelberg/Steve Lacy/George Lewis/Harjen Gorten/Han Bennink: *Change of Season* (Music of Herbie Nichols) (1984, Soul Note -86) Nichols cut three CDs worth of material for Blue Note in 1955-56, a bit more or Bethlehem in 1957, then fell out of sight and died young in 1963. Trombonist Roswell Rudd studied under Nichols and made a number of efforts at reviving his music, including *Regeneration*, an exceptional 1982 album with Steve Lacy, Misha Mengelberg, Kent Carer, and Han Bennink, which was split with one side of Nichols' compositions, the other of Thelonious Monk tunes. This follows up with an all-Nichols program, with Lacy, Mengelberg, and Bennink returning, George Lewis replacing Rudd at trombone, and Harjen Gorter instead of Carter at bass. The soprano sax and trombone contrast strongly while tracing out the contours of the music, while the Dutch avant-swing section picks the rhythm apart. [8]

Misha Mengelberg/Steve Lacy/George Lewis/Ernst Rejseger/Han Bennink: *Dutch Masters* (1987, Soul Note -94) Two Lacy pieces, two by Mengelberg, two by Thelonious Monk who remains a mainstay of both leaders; don't understand the spelling of ICP's longtime cellist's name -- it's Reijseger everywhere else; while the Dutch provide the oddball swing here, the prime sound masters are the

Americans. [8]

Misha Mengelberg: *Two Days in Chicago* (1998, Hatology -2CD) You can focus on Mengelberg's style on the 27-minute "Chicago Solo" which opens the second disc (the "Live" one). In particular, he likes to punch out rhythm figures with his left hand while his right hand works flights of fancy. This seems simple enough on its own, but when he works in groups he brings life to the party. Groups is what he found in Chicago. The first disc (the "Studio" one) features various trios and quartets, including two cuts with a trio filled out by Ken Vandermark and Hamid Drake, and two longer ones in a quartet with Fred Anderson, Kent Kessler, and Drake. Anderson doesn't match Vandermark's flow and volubility, but he makes for an interesting contrast, and Kessler has rarely played better. The Studio disc (first, but recorded later) is quite wonderful. The Live disc takes more patience. Not sure who plays in the duos there (most likely Ab Baars). [+]

Helen Merrill

Helen Merrill: *Parole e Musica* (1960, RCA [Italy]) Eleven sterling standards, at once authoritative and seductive even on songs you've heard everyone else do. Cut in Rome with a couple local groups delighted to back the visiting star, with a spoken intro before each track, translating the lyrics into Italian. For me that doesn't add to the allure, but I can see where it might. [7]

Helen Merrill: *Compact Jazz* (1954-58, Mercury -87) Old, out-of-print compilation, from what is likely her most prime period. The opening "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," with Clifford Brown, is classic. Haven't quite connected with the slow stuff yet. [+]

Pat Metheny

Pat Metheny/Ornette Coleman: *Song X: Twentieth Anniversary* (1985, Nonesuch -05) Anyone even roughly familiar with Coleman's evolution from *Science Fiction* in 1971 up through *Virgin Beauty* in 1988 will instantly recognize the real author here. Metheny got top billing because he made the deal that got the album released. Likewise, the reissue is part of Metheny's deal with his latest label. This makes for some interesting contrasts that have little to do with music. Metheny has enjoyed rare commercial favor throughout his career, receiving major label support everywhere he's gone. Coleman, on the other hand, never worked consistently with a label after his early Atlantics and Blue Notes, and often has opted not to record rather than to feed the exploiters. One result of this is that only two Coleman albums from the '70s and '80s are still in print -- making him far and away the most obscure genius in jazz. So maybe you don't know those albums? In the '70s Coleman started working with electric guitar and bass, producing albums that were true fusion -- in the sense that fusion produces new elements plus copious energy, not just a mix of the old compounds. Metheny had early on recorded an album of Coleman pieces, and had worked quite a bit with Coleman bassist Charlie Haden, so however strange *Song X* may seem within Metheny's crossover-dominated catalog, he clearly knew what he was doing here, and plays with exceptional skill. Haden and Jack DeJohnette also work to steady the platform, letting Metheny and Coleman cut loose. The result is a satisfying mix of old-and-new Ornette, an interesting contrast to Coleman's own 1985 album, *In All Languages*, where he kept his new and reformed old groups separate. The reissue adds six scraps that didn't fit the original LP length, putting them seamlessly up front where they warm up the themes the album proper extends. [10]

Pat Metheny Group: *Imaginary Day* (1997, Warner Bros.) Evidently one of the major jazz guitarists

of our era, both popularly and artistically, although I've never figured out why. This isn't a particularly well-regarded album, but I found it at the library so I thought I'd give it a spin. Dense texture, forward momentum. Guests provide extra percussion, which is nice; some vocals too, which isn't. Metheny's done 40+ albums so far. I don't dislike this one (not much, anyway), but don't see much reason to recommend it either. [4]

Glenn Miller

Glenn Miller: *Platinum Glenn Miller* (1939-42, Bluebird -2CD -03) He's remembered as the most popular bandleader in America, but his reign was brief -- less than four years. I have an older comp which covers the same years, *The Essential Glenn Miller* (1939-42 [1995], RCA, 2CD), which I graded B-. This sounds like it should be graded higher, so I wanted to look at the deltas. The biggest thing is that the old one had 47 songs, whereas this is limited to 40. But the song changes are substantial, adding 13 and dropping 20. The obvious difference is that they added on a few songs that are better known from subsequent rock remakes. I think Miller's legacy breaks down into several more/less separate things: 1) his instrumental numbers had a slick, professional, mechanical sheen to them; it's often said that whatever kind of music Miller was doing, it wasn't jazz -- and that's born out not only by the lack of improvisation, but by the lack of the potential for improvisation; Miller was too tight for all that jazz; 2) his vocal number, which include half or maybe a bit more of the songs collected here, are hopelessly dated; consequently, they break down into: 2a) things that are merely archaic, and 2b) things that are downright campy. As time goes by, we tend to remember the great black jazz bands of the era better than the white bands who were more popular at the time -- Benny Goodman is merely an exception that proves the rule, because he did have a great jazz band -- but Miller, almost alone, seems to be able to keep gaining new fans. (Tommy Dorsey still rides on Frank Sinatra's coattails; Woody Herman and Artie Shaw still have jazz bona fides.) Miller's sudden, tragic death -- familiar through the movie -- has something to do with this, but so does the music. This was a crack big band, and Miller's legacy lived on in the big bands that backed Sinatra in the '50s: Billy May (a Miller alumnus), and especially Nelson Riddle. And there's the camp factor. Note that none of these cuts feature the Andrews Sisters -- those have been shunted off to some other compilation. [+]

Glenn Miller: *Jazz Moods: Hot* (1939-42, Bluebird/Legacy -05) Hot and heavy, like a train barreling around the bend, going where you expect because it wouldn't dare jump free of its rails. Seven of fourteen tracks are dupes from *Essential*, but the mix is less vocal, more brass. [+]

The Essential Glenn Miller (1939-42, RCA/Legacy -2CD -05) I had one of those moments when you realize you're getting old back in the late '80s swing band craze when I ran into two teenagers gushing about Glenn Miller, their latest discovery. Miller had died before I was born, but not so far back that his immediate influence had waned much. The pre-rock pop of the '50s could trace roots back as far as vaudeville, but Miller was the point where big bands tipped from jazz to pop. In the '50s big bands had been reduced to little more than backdrops for crooners, and much the same could be said about Miller, except that the name you know wasn't Ray Eberle or Tex Beneke -- it was Miller, the trombonist-leader. Miller's jazz standing is almost nil: his band could play hot and swing hard, but nobody soloed, and most songs set pieces for pop singers. Well-crafted pop, of course, and the harmonic sophistication of "Moonlight Serenade" is wondrous, but I can't help but wonder what Miller's newfound teenybopper fans might make of Jimmie Lunceford or Chick Webb. [+]

Pete Minger

The Pete Minger Quartet: *Minger Painting* (1983, Jazz Alliance -91) The only date visible here is 1991, but this seems to have been originally released as *Straight From the Source* in 1983. Don't recognize the others: Keter Betts (bass), Bobby Durham (drums), Dolph Castellano (piano). Minger is a mainstream trumpet player who mostly played in the Basie band. He has very little else in his own name, but is a nice, clean player, and this is enjoyable, relaxing jazz. [5]

Charles Mingus

Charles Mingus: *East Coasting* (1957, Shout! Factory -05) More Mingus workshop experiments, overshadowed by his better known Atlantics, but in the middle of a stretch where everything he turned out burned with excitement. [9]

Charles Mingus: *A Modern Jazz Symposium of Music and Poetry* (1957, Shout! Factory -05) Title sounds awful, but the only spoken stretch is a Mingus meditation on jazz, with asides on his landlord, and the music is near-classic. [9]

Charlie Mingus: *Tijuana Moods* (1957, RCA -2CD) This was one of Mingus's first extended works, but it's gone through the editing wringer several times, especially for its first release in 1962 and the subsequent mirror splice of *New Tijuana Moods*. This set releases all of the bits and pieces, and while the world hardly needs more false starts, it still works pretty well. The first disc is a coherent album -- perhaps the most coherent yet eeked out of this material -- and the second has some interesting alternatives and a long stretch of Mingus-speak. Glad to have it. [9]

Charlie Mingus: *Tijuana Moods* (1957, RCA Victor/Legacy -07) With *Pithecanthropus Erectus* in 1956 Mingus started to make his move as a composer and arranger, drawing together his experiences with Kid Ory, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and his own experimental workshops into a synthesis that spanned the length and breadth of jazz history with his unique daring and grandeur. A trip across the Mexican border inspired these sessions, producing four Spanish-tinged originals and an arrangement of "Flamingo" that Ellington could be proud of, but the tapes languished until 1962, a mess of false starts and derailments. When Mingus finally patched them into an album, he was pleased enough to proclaim it his best ever. That would be an exaggeration, but he anticipated world-swing moves that Ellington took another decade to match. Reissues in 1986 and 2002 swept up more and more -- the former, dubbed *New Tijuana Moods*, filled out a CD-length disc with alternate takes, and the latter tacked on a second disc. This time they swing back the other way, sticking with Mingus's edits for a non-redundant 36:00, but adding on a 10:57 bonus track with Lonnie Elder rapping over a Mingus vibe. [10]

Charles Mingus: *Mingus Ah Um* (1959, Columbia/Legacy -09) [10]

Charles Mingus: *Mingus Dynasty* (1959, Columbia/Legacy -09) [9]

Charles Mingus: *Mingus Ah Um [Legacy Edition]* (1959, Columbia/Legacy 2CD -09) Frantically label-hopping in the late 1950s, Mingus landed at Columbia for two albums: the title album here on the first disc, and the erratic follow-up, *Mingus Dynasty*, that fills most of the second disc. The former is an undoubted masterpiece. Mingus learned jazz from the ground up, playing trad with Kid Ory, swinging with Red Norvo, apprenticing with Duke Ellington, bopping with Bird and Max Roach, finding his own path through the avant-garde. The nine neatly trimmed songs on the original *Mingus Ah Um* take a

postmodern tack on jazz history, with gospel welling up in "Better Get It in Your Soul," nods to "Jelly Roll" and "Bird Calls" and an "Open Letter to Duke" and a gorgeous remembrance of Lester Young called "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat." But they don't imitate the past; they subsume it, catapulting it into the future as urgent testimony, which was most explicit in "Fables of Faubus," heaping scorn on the segregationist governor of Arkansas. Mingus was never more Ellingtonian, but everything was updated: his septet thinner but more rambunctious, the gentility and elegance giving way to cleverness and fury. While the first disc -- even fleshed out with the edits restored and padded with redundant alternate takes -- was as perfect as jazz records get, the second slops back and forth between aimless sections and wildly inspired ones. The new edition omits three alternate takes from the 3-CD *The Complete 1959 Columbia Recordings* -- no great loss -- and it frames *Mingus Dynasty* better by starting it off with alternate takes to "Better Get It in Your Soul" and "Jelly Roll." [10]

Charles Mingus: *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady* (1963, Impulse) A suite for eleven musicians, not technically a big band but in Mingus's hands a huge sprawling monster. I've always found the "love, pain, and passionate revolt" of the finale a bit too chaotic, but many fans rank this as his masterpiece. [9]

Charles Mingus: *Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus* (1963, Impulse) Basically the same large band, with Booker Ervin and Eric Dolphy added to the reed section, but deprecated a bit because he tends to rework old material. Still, with such a band, and such material -- including key pieces from his masterpiece, *Mingus Ah Um* -- why the fuck not? [9]

Charles Mingus: *Town Hall Concert* (1964, Jazz Workshop/OJC -90) Two longish cuts (17:48, 27:31), one called "So Long Eric," the other "Praying With Eric," both of which feel like jams named after the fact. (The fact being Eric Dolphy's death soon after the concert.) Band includes Mingus, Johnny Coles (trumpet), Clifford Jordan (tenor sax), Dolphy (alto sax, bass clarinet, flute), Jaki Byard (piano), Dannie Richmond (drums). This is fairly typical of Mingus in this period, with terrific playing all around. And, of course, a huge lift from Dolphy. [9]

Blue Mitchell

One of the great hard bop trumpeters who peaked in the early 1960s, less flashy than Lee Morgan, more reliable than Booker Little, but like them died young -- at 49, just not as young. He did manage to keep working steady in the 1970s, recording more than a dozen albums nobody seems to think much of, most with "blue" or "funk" in the title.

Blue Mitchell: *Blue Soul* (1959, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) Trumpet player, made ends meet in r&b groups from Earl Bostic to Ray Charles, played hard bop with a soulful polish, both on his own records and with Horace Silver; a classy sextet with Curtis Fuller on trombone, Jimmy Heath on tenor sax, and Wynton Kelly on piano, they can cook, but shine even more on the slow ones. [9]

Blue Mitchell: *The Thing to Do* (1964, Blue Note -04) Good showcase for Horace Silver's trumpet man, with Junior Cook and Chick Corea kicking out the hard bop; starts loose, with a calypso. [+]

Blue Mitchell: *Down With It!* (1965, Blue Note -05) Lightweight but terrific hard bop set -- Al Foster and Gene Taylor keep the pot bubbling, young Chick Corea has some fine stretches on piano, journeyman Junior Cook muscles up on tenor sax, and Mitchell's trumpet is clear and bright. [9]

Blue Mitchell: *African Violet* (1977, Impulse) Hard to fault the trumpet here, or the sax when Harold

Land lends a hand, but they're wrapped up in synths that none of their rhythm options can redeem, nor can they do much with the unjazzable Stevie Wonder. [4]

Blue Mitchell: *Summer Soft* (1978, Impulse) The title song another Stevie Wonder song turned into a gaudy piece of disco trash; nor does moving the beat to the one help much, nor does focusing on the trumpet. [1]

Roscoe Mitchell

Roscoe Mitchell: *The Solo Concert* (1973, AECO) Art Ensemble of Chicago saxophonist goes solo, with squeaky soprano, thudding bass, several weights in between; he moves cautiously, picking out logical paths and sonics, nothing too straight or all that crooked, just raw thought. [6]

Roscoe Mitchell Quartet: *Live at "A Space" 1975* (1975, Sackville/Delmark -13) The Art Ensemble of Chicago's saxophonist's arsenal includes alto, tenor, and B-flat soprano sax, the latter featured in the centerpiece here, contrasted with George Lewis' trombone; also present are pianist Muhal Richard Abrams, who seems peripheral, and guitarist Spencer Barefield, but the main thing is the showcase for Lewis; reissue adds 19:36 to the 1975 LP. [7]

Roscoe Mitchell: *Nine to Get Ready* (1997, ECM -99) I've never liked Mitchell's avant-noise, so the thought of turning him loose with a big band didn't appeal to me. But someone (easy listening producer Manfred Eicher?) managed to keep Mitchell's music textural, and this group (which matches James Carter's rhythm section with a second set of piano-bass-drums, and augments the front line with Hugh Ragin and the redoubtable George Lewis) plays small and plays it smart. And when they do crank it up, you feel it like you're supposed to. [8]

Hank Mobley

Hank Mobley: *Newark 1953* (1953, Uptown -2CD -12) Young tenor saxophonist, two years before he cut the first of his many fine Blue Notes, in a previously unreleased live set with Bennie Green on trombone and Walter Davis, Jr. on piano, working their best bop moves on the songs of the day, stretching out to 16 minutes on "Pennies From Heaven" -- the weakness in the sound just adds to the ambiance. [8]

Hank Mobley: *Dippin'* (1965, Blue Note -06) Aside from a token ballad this could just as well be a Lee Morgan album, since trumpet runs roughshod over sax at will, at least when these two play; it holds up better than most because Harold Mabern and the rhythm section keep things moving, but also because Mobley gets to stretch out a bit on the ballad. [6]

Hank Mobley: *Straight No Filter* (1963-66, Blue Note -95) With bonuses tacked on, this is a jumble of sessions. The common denominator is the trumpet-sax-piano-bass-drums lineup. The trumpets are: Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Donald Byrd; pianos: McCoy Tyner, Barry Harris, Andrew Hill, Herbie Hancock; bass: Bob Cranshaw, Paul Chambers, John Ore, Butch Warren; drums: Billy Higgins, Philly Joe Jones. The start of this album -- three cuts including the title piece -- strikes me as the best: Lee Morgan is the trumpet, and McCoy Tyner particularly distinguishes himself on piano. The rest flows along in the usual hard bop vein -- nothing wrong with that, but nothing very special either. [5]

Hank Mobley: *A Slice of the Top* (1966, Blue Note -95) A largish band here: James Spaulding (alto

sax), Lee Morgan (trumpet, of course), Kiane Zawadi (euphonium), Howard Johnson (tuba), plus a rhythm section of McCoy Tyner (piano), Bob Cranshaw (bass), and Billy Higgins (drums). The third cut ("Cute 'n Pretty") sounds like it has flute on it -- don't know whether a euphonium can do that, but Spaulding has been known to play quite a bit of flute. Sounds like hard bop on the back end, but a bit too much up front. [5]

Hank Mobley: *High Voltage* (1967, Blue Note -05) The hard bop side of soul jazz, mostly groove pieces flashed with Blue Mitchell's trumpet and Jackie McLean's alto sax, plus a ballad feature for the leader. [+]

Hank Mobley: *Reach Out!* (1968, Blue Note -05) Woody Shaw complements Mobley nicely, especially on the typical blues fare, but the instrumentals of the hits du jour -- title anthem from the Four Tops and the infectious "Goin' Out of My Head" -- are mere echoes, despite George Benson's slinky guitar. [5]

Hank Mobley: *The Flip* (1969, Blue Note -03) A crackling hard bop session, thanks to trumpeter Dizzy Reece, whose flamboyant riffs dominate, obscuring a fine saxophonist who was nearing the end of a long string of superb albums. [+]

Hafez Modirzadeh

Hafez Modirzadeh: *By Any Means Necessary!* (1999, X Bot 25) Tenor saxophone with a thin and scratchy feel, sort of Lester Young filtered through John Coltrane. He also plays soprano sax, flute, and other instruments which accentuate the south Asian feel. (As best I recall Modirzadeh comes from Iran. I've run across him in the past working with Anthony Brown's Asian-American Orchestra.) [+]

Thelonious Monk

Thelonious Monk: *The Very Best* (1947-52, Blue Note -05) It doesn't surprise me that the most consistent of the samplers of Monk's early works features Art Blakey and/or Milt Jackson on 12 of 13 tracks -- Monk's always been a genius, but it took the world a while to get the hang of him, and Blakey and Jackson were the first to figure him out. [10]

Thelonious Monk Trio (1952-54, Prestige -07) Monk recorded four 10-inch LPs for Prestige, released in 1953-54, reissued as 12-inch LPs in 1956-57, and eventually spun into all sorts of confusing packages, culminating in the 3-CD *Complete Prestige Recordings*. One source of confusion is the naming, where *Monk*, *Thelonious Monk*, and *Thelonious Monk Trio* have all been used to describe the same music -- I'm going with the spine and back-cover title here, as opposed to the front cover, with its small "thelonious," large "MONK," and clear "PRESTIGE LP 7027." Like the cover art, this faithfully reproduces a 1957 12-inch LP that combined a 1953 10-inch LP and two (of four) cuts from a 1954 10-incher. It's hard to see why they didn't restore the missing cuts given that the album only runs 34:27, a limit of '50s technology that is at least sonically transcended here: the effect is to consolidate most (but not all) of Monk's trios in a handy package, separate from the quintets featuring a young and brilliant saxophonist, now available as *Thelonious Monk/Sonny Rollins*. Classic Monk tunes here like "Bye-Ya," "Monk's Dream," "Blue Monk" -- but the covers may be even more impressive: a solo "Just a Gigolo," Art Blakey's percolating rhythm on "Sweet and Lovely," Monk's own radical take on "These Foolish Things." [10]

Thelonious Monk: *Plays Duke Ellington* (1955, Riverside/OJC) If Basie was the pianist distinguished by the notes he left out, Monk was the pianist distinguished by the notes he misplaced. His own compositions were built around such misplacements, and with horns he could orchestrate them into marvelously unexpected concoctions. But Monk was never much of a pianist; his greatness was conceptual, but his execution was rarely more than suggestive. Ellington, on the other hand, always put everything in its right place, and fleshed it out with a lushness that Monk couldn't commit to even if he wanted to. The juxtaposition is abstract; in effect, it is deconstruction before its time, interesting in spots but never compelling. [5]

Thelonious Monk: *Brilliant Corners* (1956, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) The title cut was so unconventional none of 25 studio takes nailed it, so the record was famously pieced together after the fact; you can still sense the fear and awe the band, including young Sonny Rollins, felt in facing Monk's tunes -- a solo piano cover of "I Surrender Dear" comes as blessed relief, but turns out every bit as brilliant. [10]

Thelonious Monk: *Thelonious Himself* (1957, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) Solo piano, excepting one anomalous take of "Monk's Mood" with John Coltrane and Wilbur Ware; covers like "April in Paris" and "A Ghost of a Chance" are carefully dissected to reveal odd tangents, but the process is so slow and painstaking it's hard maintain interest. [5]

Thelonious Monk Quartet With John Coltrane: *At Carnegie Hall* (1957, Blue Note -05) Small world it was back in 1957. The program for Carnegie Hall's Thanksgiving Jazz concert -- two shows, top-priced tickets going for \$3.95 -- lists a few other folks you might like to hear: Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie, Chet Baker with Zoot Sims, Sonny Rollins ("introducing in concert the brilliant"), and "special attraction" Ray Charles. But Monk's two sets add up to 50:35, and satisfy our craving to hear something more substantial from his short-lived, rarely recorded Coltrane quartet than that cruddy-sounding Five Spot tape that was acclaimed as *Discovery!* back in 1993. It turns out that the concert was recorded by Voice of America for overseas broadcast, but the tapes have languished ever since in the Library of Congress vaults until Larry Appelbaum made his discovery. The sound is fine. Monk engages quickly, but Coltrane is revelatory, especially on the one non-Monk tune where he kicks everything up a gear, then sustains that level to the end. [10]

Thelonious Monk: *The Complete Blue Note Recordings* (1947-58, Blue Note -4CD) This always struck me as a superfluous box: the four CDs are relatively short as these things go; the first two duplicate the early sessions long available as *Genius of Modern Music*, and the fourth is the notoriously ill-recorded live Coltrane session. Disc 3 combines a 1952 session with Kenny Dorham and Lucky Thompson with a couple of 1957 Sonny Rollins cuts. The first two CDs are "must have" for anyone with a serious interest in jazz history, but they've always struck me as tough listening: this is the crucible of Monk's canon, yet the early pieces demonstrate how difficult his compositions could be to play by how poorly his accompanists handle them, and the bits of Monk's own crude solo piano and some seriously awful vocals don't help either. Still, several rotations through this box keep surprising me: the sound has been improved, which helps both the first genius disc and the Coltrane session a lot, with some the early material that I had never much cared for gaining ground. And the third disc is quite a thrill. There are, I think, better things in the Riverside series, but superfluous this music is not. [9]

Thelonious Monk: *Thelonious Alone in San Francisco* (1959, Riverside/OJC -11) Solo piano, something I've never got the hang of with Monk, probably because I expect that any pianist who would

try such a thing must at least use both hands, preferably with a little extra on the left; the dissonances in Monk's original pieces create their own rhythm, especially on an opening "Blue Monk" that holds up especially well, but the most distinct thing about his covers is their simplicity. [7]

The Best of Thelonious Monk (1955-60, Riverside -04) Monk's second stage expanded to include horns -- he famously chided Coleman Hawkins and John Coltrane for their failures to follow his notoriously difficult music; the box fills twelve discs, so omissions are easy to pick on -- this completely misses my two favorite albums from the period -- but otherwise it's redoubtable, as it should be; like many samplers of major oeuvres, its utility depends on your budget. [9]

Thelonious Monk: Criss-Cross (1962-63, Columbia/Legacy -03): Fine renditions, with Charlie Rouse as Monk's perfect foil, of such signature tunes as "Hackensack," "Rhythm-a-Ning," and "Crepuscule With Nellie," plus a thoroughly Monkified "Tea for Two." [9]

Thelonious Monk: It's Monk's Time (1964, Columbia/Legacy -03) Monk has become such a major force in jazz that it's easy to forget how hard it was to merely play his music. His first efforts, on *Genius of Modern Music, Volume 1* (1947, Blue Note), confused his sidemen to no end. His mid-'50s efforts, like *Brilliant Corners* (1956, Riverside), were often stitched together from multiple takes, because musicians as redoubtable as Coleman Hawkins and John Coltrane had trouble getting whole takes straight. However, by 1962, when Monk started recording for Columbia, his revolution was complete. Monk had by then settled into a routine, mostly playing with a quartet that featured Charlie Rouse on tenor sax and Ben Riley on drums, mostly reworking standards -- which is what his own songbook had become. The albums were anticlimactic -- especially after his streak on Riverside -- but they are curiously satisfying anyway. Much of the credit goes to Rouse, a saxophonist who could not only play Monk but make him seem warm and comfy. This is perhaps the most satisfying of the Columbia albums, with three covers that fit especially well into the canon: solo takes on "Memories of You" and "Nice Work If You Can Get It," and especially the first-solo-then-group "Lulu's Back in Town." [10]

Thelonious Monk: Solo Monk (1964, Columbia/Legacy -03) In *But Beautiful*, Geoff Dyer imagines Monk in the mental ward: "Played a few chords on the piano and the doctors thought they noticed some untutored musical instinct twitching from his hands, hitting notes that had a kind of ugly beauty. Tinkly, thunking things." Monk solo is usually like that, but sometimes he knocks out a "These Foolish Things" that fills you with wonder. [+]

Thelonious Monk: Live at the 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival (1964, MJF -07) Four terrific quartet tracks, with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse in splendid form, and the pianist especially delightful on "Bright Mississippi" -- a Monkified "Sweet Georgia Brown"; five extra horns show up for the Buddy Collette-sketched encores, with hot boppish trumpet and more funky piano. [9]

Thelonious Monk: At Newport 1963 & 1965 (1963-65, Columbia/Legacy, 2CD -02) Working out of his usual songbook, with Rouse on both discs and Pee Wee Russell on the first, these are typical sets in an oeuvre that offers endless fascination. [+]

Thelonious Monk: Monk (1964-65, Columbia/Legacy -02) Another fine album with the Charlie Rouse quartet, mostly standards given the Monk touch, plus a wonderful take on "Pannonica." [9]

Thelonious Monk: Monk in Paris: Live at the Olympia (1965, Hyena -03) With Rouse, of course, this famous concert gives his well honed songbook an exceptionally vibrant edge; comes with a bonus

DVD from a different Monk concert. [9]

Thelonious Monk: *Monk 'Round the World* (1961-65, Thelonious/Hyena -04) The second of who knows how many CDs (and DVDs) of live Monk, featuring Charlie Rouse playing the same songs you've heard them play again and again and again. How much of this anyone needs is an open question, but it's hard to fault the music. As for the video, the b&w footage just proves that Monk's piano looks as odd as it sounds. [+]

Thelonious Monk: *Underground* (1967-68, Columbia/Legacy -03) The last of Monk's studio albums, fitfully stitched together with Rouse limited to three cuts (including a fragile "Ugly Beauty" and a discursive "Green Chimneys") and guest Jon Hendricks jacking "In Walked Bud" up to vocalese heaven. [5]

Thelonious Monk: *The Columbia Years* (1962-68, Columbia -3CD) Already a genius in his Blue Note years (see the 4CD box), turning brilliant corners during his Riverside years (good for a 15CD box), by the time he got to Columbia was troubled, shaky, coasting. Best known as a composer, his famous tunes were almost all written early and rehashed endlessly as the world struggled first to play them and eventually managed to play with them. But while Monk's Columbia years were his swansong, they are hardly without merit: not only do the songs bear up under endless scrutiny, but Monk had found his most sympathetic saxophonist in Charlie Rouse, and it is Rouse's warm tone that carries Monk's best records from the period. This is a fair sampling of the period, including some of Monk's solo work (which I've never thought much of). [9]

Wes Montgomery

Wes Montgomery: *Echoes of Indiana Avenue* (1957-58, Resonance -12) Early tapes, four cuts from an unknown studio session and the rest gigging around Indianapolis, his fingerpicking less fluid than it would soon become, the pianists more into boogie, but there are hints of charisma and genius, especially on a final blues improv which you don't have to read any future interest into. [8]

Wes Montgomery: *Incredible Jazz Guitar* (1960, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) Not really -- despite his overwhelming influence on two-thirds of the jazz guitarists who followed in his wake, at best he was a subtle craftsman with natural swing on basic blues; nowhere is that more clear than on this elegant quartet with Tommy Flanagan's piano as delectable as the guitar. [9]

Wes Montgomery: *So Much Guitar! [OJC Remasters]* (1961, Fantasy/OJC -13) The dominant figure in American jazz guitar before fusion and, less decisively, still today, his Riverside albums assumed biblical stature, with *Incredible Jazz Guitar* the consensus pick, and this set with Hank Jones (piano), Ron Carter (bass), drums, and extra percussion (Ray Barretto) a couple clicks back. Still less than overpowering, especially when they slow it down a bit, and further diminished by tacking on a later live recording that same year, *The Montgomery Brothers in Canada*, favoring vibes-playing brother Buddy. [6] (original album: [7]; *The Montgomery Brothers in Canada*: [5])

Wes Montgomery: *Boss Guitar* (1963, Riverside/OJC) With Mel Rhyne on organ and Jimmy Cobb on drums, your basic Montgomery album with his sweet, slick guitar turned inward, not nearly as imposing as the title proposes. [7]

Wes Montgomery: *Goin' Out of My Head* (1965, Verve -07) With Verve the signature guitarist of his generation developed a jones for icky pop songs, which is partially interfered with here by the staunch,

even bombastic, big band backup of Oliver Nelson; both have their moments, although they rarely share them. [5]

Wes Montgomery: *Smokin' at the Half Note* (1965, Verve -05) The front cover shows this as originally credited, with the Wynton Kelly Trio on top, Montgomery on the bottom. The Kelly Trio had its start as the rhythm section of the Miles Davis Quintet, but when Miles decided not to tour in the early '60s Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb set out on their own. Montgomery had done his major work for Riverside up to 1963 before moving to Verve where he mostly cut overly slick and saccharine versions of pop hits, but this date has grown in his canon, regarded by many as one of the essential milestones in jazz guitar. That judgment strikes me as overly generous. The five cuts on the original album -- three actually recut in the studio by Creed Taylor after finding the originals somehow lacking -- were precariously balanced between Kelly and Montgomery, providing tantalizing moments of each. This new edition tilts the balance decisively toward the guitarist with six extra cuts meant for radio, most with MC intros and chatter, but most also with sterling examples of Montgomery's melodic lines. [9]

Wes Montgomery: *Down Here on the Ground* (1967-68, Verve -09) No longer incredible, in his last year just (nearing 45) a pleasant instrumentalist playing hackneyed pop tunes over chintzy Don Sebesky orchestration with Hubert Laws flute and Ray Barretto congas. [4]

Jemeel Moondoc

Jemeel Moondoc & William Parker: *New World Pygmies* (1998, Eremite) Moondoc hung around Cecil Taylor during his college phase, then settled in New York and put together a group called Ensemble Muntu with Parker, Roy Campbell, and Rashid Bakr. Parker worked with Muntu up to around 1986, but then not again until this meeting. Three of the six pieces here are credited to Parker, one to Moondoc, two (including the title cut) jointly, so perhaps Parker has a home field advantage. Rumors that Moondoc is in scream mode are exaggerated, if not downright false. He plays with precision and logic, and much of this is quite pleasing if not downright lovely. Parker is rock solid, of course -- worth the effort of listening to even when Moondoc is playing. A drummer might have been a plus -- for at least part of a second (two years later) volume Hamid Drake joins. The three of them also play on *Live at the Glenn Miller Café*, which is looser and jauntier than this one, both easier listening and more thrills. But this may pay more dividends if you take the trouble to listen to it. [9]

Michael Moore

Alto sax, clarinet.

Michael Moore Trio: *Chicoutimi* (1993, Ramboy) This is less immediately beguiling than Moore's more recent albums (*Jewels and Binoculars*, *White Widow*), but it's been steadily gaining on me, even while it defies analysis. A trio with Fred Hersch and Mark Helias, with Moore sticking to clarinet, recorded in Bremen, which perhaps inevitably pays homage to the Jimmy Giuffre/Paul Bley/Steve Swallow trio. Not sure what the title reference to the town on the northern frontier of Quebec means, other than that it doubles as a song title. The album moves slowly through many elegant sections with a few rough spots along the way. [+]

Michael Moore Trio: *Bering* (1993, Ramboy) This was the follow-up to *Chicoutimi* -- same group

(Fred Hersch, Mark Helias, Moore sticking to clarinet), same type of music. Distinctions are marginal, but I like it a shade better. Really beautiful music. [9]

Benny Moré

Benny Moré With Pérez Prado: *Mambos by Benny Moré: El Barbaro del Ritmo* (1948-50, Tumbao -92) Left in Mexico after the Matamoros tour, Cuba's most exciting young singer hooks up with Cuba's most exciting young composer-bandleader, a combustion that changed the face of Latin music forever; both got stronger and slicker in the '50s, but the raw excitement here carries the day. [10]

Benny Moré: *La Colección Cubana* (1953-59, Music Club -98) Don't know how well this fits or samples Moré's work, but this rises above the usual Cuban big band din. By reputation he's a giant of the genre. This sounds like a good way to make his acquaintance. [9]

Benny Moré y Su Banda Gigante: *El Legendario Ídolo del Pueblo Cubano: Grabaciones Completas 1953-1960* (1953-60, Tumbao, 4CD) The greatest of all Cuban singers, Moré rose to fame in Mexico fronting the divergent groups of Miguel Matamoros and Pérez Prado; he returned to Cuba in 1952, hoping to lead his own group, and succeeding with one of gigantic proportions; both group and singer stretched over the entire stylistic range of Cuban music, the singer never sounding out of place, the band a testament to his greatness; Moré's health started to fade in 1959, and he died in Cuba in 1963, having spurned offers to move north; includes a valuable booklet, mostly in Spanish, only some parts translated into English and French. [9]

Lee Morgan

Lee Morgan: *Indeed!* (1956, Blue Note -07) The 18-year-old trumpet whiz's first studio experience, cut one day before the Hank Mobley session that Savoy rushed into print as *Introducing Lee Morgan*, this is as interesting for the presence of rarely-recorded Clarence Sharpe on alto sax and the way Horace Silver's piano jumps out at you; Morgan still had a ways to go, but the excitement around him was already palpable. [8]

Lee Morgan: *Volume 2: Sextet* (1956, Blue Note -07) Less than a month after *Indeed!*, Morgan is sounding even more confident in a larger, more daunting group featuring Hank Mobley on tenor sax and little known Kenny Rodgers on alto sax, with Horace Silver again providing his inexorable bounce. [8]

Lee Morgan: *Volume 3* (1957, Blue Note -07) Still 18, at the helm of a subtler, more sophisticated sextet, and even more clearly the star, despite the estimable talent around him -- saxophonists Benny Golson and Gigi Gryce, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Charlie Persip; Golson wrote the whole program, spreading out the complexity, while Kelly holds it all together. [7]

Lee Morgan: *The Cooker* (1957, Blue Note -06) Relatively early, in fact still in his teens, but Morgan's trumpet sound is loud and clear, contrasting brilliantly with Pepper Adams' baritone sax, with a young Bobby Timmons on piano. [7]

Lee Morgan: *Candy* (1957, Blue Note -07) Still in his teens, but at last out front alone, leading a quartet with the redoubtable Sonny Clark on piano, running through a mix of standards, including a couple he reclaims from the pop/r&b charts -- "Candy" and "Personality"; he's bursting with

energy and ideas, still finding himself, but completely in control. [9]

Lee Morgan: *Tom Cat* (1964, Blue Note -06) With three horns this is a little busy up front, but Morgan's trumpet is never far from the spotlight; McCoy Tyner provides some slick interludes when he gets the chance, and contributes one song to make sure he does. [5]

Lee Morgan: *The Gigolo* (1965, Blue Note -06) A brisk, chunky hard bop quintet, with Wayne Shorter playing second banana to the trumpeter, and perhaps more importantly pianist Harold Mabern cooking up the grits and gravy. [6]

Lee Morgan: *The Very Best* (1957-65, Blue Note -05) One could quarrel, but I wouldn't leave out his star turn in Bennie Golson's "I Remember Clifford" even though he was born to burn, not just smolder. Two classic hard bop anthems, no real blowouts, nothing from *Search for the New Land* either. [9]

Lee Morgan: *The Sixth Sense* (1967-68, Blue Note -04) Distinctively brilliant trumpet at the service of a hard bop already hardening into orthodoxy. [+]

Lee Morgan: *Sonic Boom* (1967-69, Blue Note -03) This rescues two obscure, relatively late sessions led by the great hard bop trumpeter; the two groups provide ample support, and Morgan sounds characteristically bright. [+]

Ikue Mori

Ikue Mori: *Painted Desert* (1994, Tzadik -95) Mori programs drum machines, which is neither here nor there. What makes this record so exceptional is that she is joined by two superb guitarists, Robert Quine and Marc Ribot. When they work out, as on "Desperado," you get some of the finest electric guitar music ever made. Slower, more atmospheric pieces like "Cheyenne" are more balanced between drums and guitars. The avant-sounding "Gundown" is a synthesized piece of old west terrorism, lasting a scant 1:43. Only the finale, "Painted Desert," gets weepy, presumably the tired sunset of a long day. [9]

Joe Morris

Joe Morris Trio: *Symbolic Gesture* (1993, Soul Note -94) With Nate McBride (bass), Curt Newton (drums). This is relatively minimal support for Morris -- I almost suspect he would be clearer solo, since the bass in particular tends to disappear, leaving big holes. Turn it up and it gets a bit better, and Morris cuts loose with some interesting lines. [5]

Joe Morris/Ken Vandermark/Hans Poppel: *Like Rays* (1998, Knitting Factory Works) Poppel plays piano; Vandermark plays clarinet and bass clarinet; Morris plays electric guitar. The compositions are jointly credited, which may mean that they were improvised on the spot. Limiting himself to the clarinets keeps Vandermark on the quiet side, which in turn keeps him from overwhelming the ever-delicate Morris. Morris tends to build his music around single note lines, which at his best gives him a bebop quality. Still, nothing he does here comes off so fluently; here he tends to play little fragments, which Vandermark extends, and Poppel tarts up, but it never breaks out of the fragmentary. [4]

Joe Morris Quartet: *A Cloud of Black Birds* (1998, AUM Fidelity) Quartet consists of Morris (guitar), Chris Lightcap (bass), Mat Maneri (violin), Jerome Deupree (drums). Morris' use of the single plucked string lets him dance around the guitar like Charlie Parker on sax, the difference being a

thinness and delicacy of sound. Bass and violin add to the string resonance and the complexity of their interaction gives this album more weight than Morris usually gets. "Radiant Flux" is a fine example of the whole thing working: rich and vibrant. [+]

Joe Morris w/DKV Trio: *Deep Telling* (1998, Okka Disk -99) DKV Trio is Hamid Drake (drums), Kent Kessler (bass), and Ken Vandermark (tenor sax). They released four albums from 1997 to 2002, plus three albums backing up and/or collaborating with others: Aaly Trio, Fred Anderson, and Morris, a guitarist from Boston. This breaks down into subgroups for 5 of 8 cuts: two Kessler-Morris duos, three trios omitting a D, K, or V. The opener finds Vandermark parodying Morris's guitar style, rather tedious, which may help the next two Vandermark-less cuts sound more refreshing. Morris plays long lines with a sort of staccato rhythm for a somewhat indeterminate groove -- works nicely here when he gets to lead. Vandermark's return is more auspicious, and the 18:35 "Telling" suite finally gets all of the pieces moving in synch. [7]

Bennie Moten

Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra: *Basie Beginnings* (1929-32, RCA) Now mostly a footnote to Count Basie's career, at the time they were the hottest shit in Kansas City, and the latter sessions here, with Hot Lips Page and Ben Webster and Walter Page, swung as hard as the legendary band that Basie brought to NY. Plus five Jimmy Rushing vocals. Not archival. [9]

Paul Motian

Paul Motian: *Rarum XVI: Selected Recordings* (1972-87, ECM -04) Best known as the drummer of choice for pianists from Bill Evans to Marilyn Crispell, Motian's own groups eschew piano in favor of saxophonists from Charles Brackeen to Joe Lovano, playing his own loose-limbed compositions; an appetizing platter of his work before he moved on to JMT, including pieces with pianists Keith Jarrett and Paul Bley. [+]

Paul Motian: *Paul Motian and the Electric Bebop Band* (1992, JMT/Winter & Winter -05) Electric guitars (Brad Schoepach, aka Shepik, and Kurt Rosenwinkel) and bass (Stomu Takeishi), plus Joshua Redman, romp through bebop classics. [9]

Paul Motian and the Electric Bebop Band: *Reincarnation of a Love Bird* (1994, JMT/Winter & Winter -05) Moving on to Mingus -- the problem everyone has with Mingus repertory is the palpable loss of edge compared to the original; Mingus' own bands played like their lives were on the line, and amplification alone doesn't compensate. [+]

Paul Motian: *Play Monk and Powell* (1998, Winter & Winter -99) This is Motian's Electric Bebop Band, consisting of two electric guitars (Kurt Rosenwinkel, Steve Cardenas), two tenor saxes (Chris Potter, Chris Cheek), electric bass (Steve Swallow), and Motian on drums. I liked the very first Electric Bebop Band album quite a bit, but the second one (on Mingus) lost me, and this one hasn't found me either. One problem may be that neither the guitars nor the saxes have a lot of oomph to them, so the potential of the electricity isn't realized. The Monk material is, of course, much more obvious than the Powell: Monk regularly wrote for saxophone, or at least orchestrated his odd lines to torture his saxophonists, so we're used to hearing them that way, and used to hearing lots of variants on those themes -- that is, I think, the secret as to why Monk has proven to be much more successful as a

repertory writer than Mingus, Powell, or any of their contemporaries. Powell, on the other hand, isn't obvious unless there's a piano in the house, which there isn't here. (Interesting that Motian, who's made virtually his whole career as a sideman accompanying pianists, never uses them in his own records.) I suspect that there's more here than I can readily hear -- that's a frequent suspicion with Motian, whose own work I often find oblique. I also suspect that I'm turned off a bit by the tone -- a problem I frequently have with Potter, in particular. Still, that's the way the game is played, and I've been through this record enough times to doubt that it's going to get better. [5]

Idris Muhammad

Idris Muhammad: *House of the Rising Sun* (1976, CTI/Epic/Legacy -04) Creed Taylor in extremis, best if you concentrate on the percussion, which is the leader's calling, instead of the curious mix of Meters-style funk and disco that Taylor thought might sell; not that it deconstructs that cleanly, or that funk isn't its own reward. [5]

Gerry Mulligan

Gerry Mulligan-Paul Desmond Quartet (1957, Verve) Really lovely work -- the two horns weave in and out, both light and sweet in tone. Perhaps less consistent than their later *Two of a Mind*, but really delightful. [9]

Gerry Mulligan/Paul Desmond Quartet: *Blues in Time* (1957, Verve -09) Five years later the same pair recorded the sublime *Two of a Mind*; this is more tentative, as two of the coolest saxophonists ever puzzle each other out. [9]

Gerry Mulligan/Johnny Hodges: *Gerry Mulligan Meets Johnny Hodges* (1959, Verve -03) Mulligan made the rounds in the late '50s, hooking up on impromptu albums with everyone from Monk to Webster, playing skillfully and showing his good manners -- which with Hodges means playing relaxed blues and making them sound gorgeous. [9]

Gerry Mulligan: *Jeru* (1962, Columbia/Legacy -05) Before Mulligan, the baritone sax was almost exclusively a big band instrument -- the most famous practitioner was Harry Carney, who toiled for Duke Ellington from 1927 until their deaths in 1974. Mulligan, too, came out of the big bands, making a name for himself as an arranger for Gene Krupa while still in his teens. In 1948-50, he made a major contribution to Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool* nonet. By 1951, the 24-year-old was secure enough as a writer and arranger that he titled his first album *Mulligan Plays Mulligan*. In 1952-53 his "piano-less" quartet with Chet Baker epitomized cool jazz -- retrospectively granting the Davis sessions their name. He established the baritone as a lead instrument, but even so he rarely recorded as the sole horn -- making this otherwise conventional sax-piano-bass-drums quartet the exception, and quite an exception! His partner here is Tommy Flanagan, one of the very few pianists who ever worked effectively with Sonny Rollins. There's nothing rushed here, nothing flamboyant -- just thoughtful, engaging improvisation. A lovely record, easily the best place to hear him play. [10]

Gerry Mulligan: *The Age of Steam* (1971, Artists House -04) Long out of print, this is one of Mulligan's more successful big band albums, with the intricate melodies and richly textured harmonies he is famous for; the CD is bundled in a DVD package with a DVD providing the sheet music, interviews, and a "master class" -- making this a textbook in the fine art of jazz arrangement. [+]

Gerry Mulligan/Chet Baker: *Carnegie Hall Concert* (1974, CTI) Their co-led "pianoless quartet" was important in establishing the cool jazz mystique in the 1950s, but their big reunion concert is mellowed out almost to the point of stasis, albeit a rather pretty one. And this being a CTI joint, the band is expanded, with Bob James electric piano, John Scofield guitar, and Dave Samuels vibes. The discography here is confusing: as best I can tell, the original was a 2-LP set, later split into two volumes, then recombined on a single 77:46 CD, sometimes as *Volume 1 & 2*, and I've seen it variously with black, blue, or orange covers, filed under either name. [5]

Gerry Mulligan: *Lonesome Boulevard* (1989, A&M) A lovely, low-key album. [+]

Mark Murphy

Mark Murphy: *Bop for Miles* (1990, HighNote -04) Somehow never managed to hear him before, which means I'm about 30 albums behind the power curve. Or maybe I just managed to avoid him. He's got this hipster/jive thing going, which he crams with a lot of scat. It's a style I never cared for, combining the worst of vocalese with the worst of Maynard G. Krebs. Band swings. But I'm a long ways from connecting with this. [4]

David Murray

David Murray: *Live at the Lower Manhattan Ocean Club* (1977, Jazzwerkstatt -10) In 2006 I was one of five writers asked to work up a consumer guide to the records of a jazz great. I was the only one to pick a living artist: tenor saxophonist David Murray, b. 1955 in California, raised on church, funk, and saxophonists from Paul Gonsalves to Albert Ayler. (The others opted for Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and Sun Ra.) I managed to pick out and write short reviews of seventeen key albums, from *Low Class Conspiracy* in 1976 through *Now Is Another Time* in 2003. At the time I credited him with 90 albums as a leader and 90 more as a sideman, and figured I had heard 60 + 40 of them -- pretty good that that left some gaps, most notably in the late 1970s when he moved to New York and took the "jazz loft scene" by storm. That period is mostly documented by live albums like this one on defunct labels: this set was originally released by India Navigation on two LPs, then in 1989 was squeezed onto one CD by hacking about eight minutes off the last song. It's finally back in print, the times slightly rejiggered from the CD. It's not a long lost classic, but it has historical interest -- for one thing, Murray plays soprano sax on his trashed trad jazz "Bechet's Bounce" -- and then some. A quartet with Lester Bowie the opposite horn, Fred Hopkins on bass, and Phillip Wilson on drums. Hopkins is already a fascinating player, and Bowie's wit complements Murray's power. [7]

David Murray Trio: *3D Family* (1978, Hatology -06) Early in Murray's career, just before the Black Saint recordings that established his career and effectively ended the decade-long exile of the avant-garde to the lofts of New York; live in Willisau with South Africans Johnny Dyani on bass and Andrew Cyrille on drums, a bit on the crude side but bursting with the raw force of creation. [9]

David Murray: *Children* (1984, Black Saint -86) Three Murray tunes plus "All the Things You Are" done by a quintet with James "Blood" Ulmer's guitar and Don Pullen's piano locked in a furious race; thrilling when they keep it up, loses something when the pace slackens. [7]

David Murray Big Band: *Live at Sweet Basil, Vol. 2* (1984, Black Saint) These Butch Morris records always seem to slip by me, but now I realize that a big part of the reason is that they're so

underrecorded: it takes some volume to get any detail at all. But here, at least when you can hear it, Murray is his usual brilliant self, and Craig Harris stands out among the background. I've always preferred Murray's quartets to his octet, and his octet to the big band; I may even prefer Murray's duos to his quartets. Good as this one is, there's another thirty, maybe forty, Murray albums I'd put on first. [5]

David Murray: *Recording NYC 1986* (1986, DIW -95) Another snapshot from a memorable year -- started with *I Want to Talk About You* and ended with *The Hill*; a quartet, of course, but with guitarist James Blood Ulmer on guitar instead of the usual piano, Fred Hopkins on bass and Sunny Murray on drums; sound is a little muffled, but the tenor sax has no problem breaking through. [7]

David Murray/Jack DeJohnette: *In Our Style* (1986, DIW -89) Mostly tenor sax-drums duets, the drummer marvelously supportive (as ever), the saxophonist psyched up; two cuts add Fred Hopkins on bass, never a bad idea; DeJohnette plays a bit of credible piano, and kickoff the final cut with some exotic percussion -- I thought vibes at first, but given the title is "Kalimba" it's most likely African thumb piano. [9]

David Murray: *Lovers* (1988, DIW -89) Cut at the same January 1988 studio session that also produced *Deep River*, *Ballads*, and *Spirituals*, same quartet; mostly ballads, "In a Sentimental Mood" the only standard, its solo coda Murray at his most tender; on "Ming" pianist Dave Burrell rises to match Murray's emotional bravura. [9]

David Murray Quintet: *Remembrances* (1990, DIW -91) Cover suggests this is child's play, and indeed this is exceptionally light and lively, with Hugh Ragin's trumpet dicing with Murray's tenor sax, and pianist Dave Burrell mixing some boogie into the rhythm section; less explicit about its place in the tradition than *Tenors* or *Sax Men*, except on "Dexter's Dues." [8]

David Murray: *Death of a Sideman* (1991, DIW -00) Featuring trumpeter Bobby Bradford, who preceded Don Cherry in Ornette Coleman's quartet and had a long collaboration with John Carter up to his death in 1991; Bradford wrote the songs in Carter's memory, and Murray picks up the thought; with Coleman alum Ed Blackwell on drums, Murray regulars Dave Burrell and Fred Hopkins on piano and bass; poignant, profound. [9]

David Murray/James Newton Quintet (1991, DIW -96) This is one of several projects which joined Murray and Newton. Newton is sort of the odds-on champ in the arena of jazz flute, although I have usually found his work rather tedious. Murray, of course, is at least as eminent in the much more competitive field of tenor sax -- and plays bass clarinet as well, which complements the flute. The Quintet lists six players, including two drummers who presumably played on separate days, but the cuts aren't listed by date or personnel. There are some outstanding saxophone runs here, as well as excellent John Hicks piano and Fred Hopkins bass. So the only real question mark is Newton. I like Newton best when he complements, as on the little hoot that ends one tune. I like Murray best when he plays, and his solo on "Doni's Song," with Hopkins backing, is one of his best ballad turns. After which, Newton chimes in with some flute that is eerily beautiful. [+]

David Murray Octet: *Picasso* (1992, DIW -95) The title comes from a Coleman Hawkins piece, but where Hawk recorded the first landmark tenor sax solo, Murray wraps a seven-slice suite around the idea and fleshes it out with five horns and some dazzling Dave Burrell piano; not as jarring or protean as earlier octets like *Ming*, the sense of motion and flow is flush throughout. [7]

David Murray Quartet: *Love and Sorrow* (1993, DIW -00) Another ballad album, framed with "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To" and "You Don't Know What Love Is"; the sole original "Sorrow Song (for W.E.B. DuBois)" leading into "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" for what may be his most quiet storm side ever; an especially touching John Hicks on piano, Fred Hopkins on bass, Idris Muhammad on drums. [9]

David Murray Quartet: *Skahill's II* (1993, DIW -94) A follow-up to *Shakill's Warrior*, a 1991 album which also featured Don Pullen on organ, providing an edgy soul jazz groove for Murray's powerful improvisations. [9]

David Murray Quartet: *Live at the Village Vanguard* (1995, 411 Records -03) This has a fly-on-the-wall quality, catching just one instant of the great saxophonist doing what he does better than almost anyone else; one wonders just why this particular instant -- good players with no special magic -- was chosen over so many others. [+]

David Murray: *Circles: Live in Cracow* (2003, Not Two) Sax trio, featuring local bass and drums duo, telepathic twins Marcin Oles and Bartlomiej Brat Oles, although they seem to be overwhelmed by their guest; Murray holds the spotlight, showing off his extensive bag of improvisatory tricks, especially on bass clarinet. [8]

Sunny Murray

Sunny Murray (1966, ESP-Disk -07) A drummer of the avant-garde, his martial machine gun beats disconnected from a two sax, one trumpet -- Haitian Jacques Coursil, little known but interesting here -- band that neither plays with nor against him; reissue adds 35 minutes of interviews which you don't need to hear more than once, but that may be true of the music, too. [5]

Sunny Murray Quintet (1966, ESP-Disk -03) Murray's importance as a drummer -- to Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, John Coltrane, and many others -- is hard to overestimate. This is a rough session, a quintet with trumpet, two alto saxes, bass and drums. One problem is that none of the horns are very distinct or all that interesting, while bassist Alan Silva tends to get buried. That leaves Murray riding herd, sounding more like a frustrated Max Roach than his usual self. As a mid-'60s avant-orgy this has fun moments. [5]

Sunny Murray with Sabir Mateen: *We Are Not at the Opera* (1998, Eremite) And amen to that. Mateen plays alto and tenor sax plus a little flute, in the time-honored free jazz tradition. Murray is one of the legends in that same tradition, and the duo format gives them all the space they need to ply their craft. And it is a craft: I've only recently started to get the hang of free drumming, which mostly involves stripping away a lot of assumptions about how the world should work, and letting it take you where it wants to go. Could, I suppose, be called zen drumming, except it's a lot noisier than that term implies. This one is terrific. [9]

Wolfgang Muthspiel

Wolfgang Muthspiel Trio: *Timezones* (1990, Amadeo) German guitarist, often likened to Pat Metheny and/or John Scofield although he is consistently more eloquent than either; this looks to be his first album, his trio augmented by splendid saxophonist Bob Berg on three cuts, testy pianist Aydin Esen on two, and both on one -- artists that tug him back and forth. [6]

Bob Nell

Bob Nell: *Why I Like Coffee* (1991, New World/Countercurrents) A pianist from Montana, this seems to be the only thing in his catalog, and was no doubt made possible by the presence of fellow Montanan Jack Walrath and Ray Anderson. Sounds good, especially when the front line brass kicks about, but the pianist is fine too. [+]

Oliver Nelson

A saxophonist from St. Louis, Nelson started recording in 1959 and was prolific until his death in 1975, mostly arranging big band sessions, some under his own name, many not.

Oliver Nelson: *Blues and the Abstract Truth* (1961, Impulse -95) A rare arranger's record that connects on all levels, partly because the blues framework is so solid, but mostly because the musicians excel individually as well as together -- Eric Dolphy and Freddie Hubbard stand out, and Bill Evans is a surprise. [10]

Oliver Nelson and His Orchestra: *"Fantabulous"* (1964, Verve -08) A big band session, deep and bluesy, with a lot of muscle and not much filigree, mostly deserving of its innovative exclamation. [8]

Oliver Nelson: *The Kennedy Dream* (1967, Verve -09) A tribute to the late president, each piece introduced by a memorable speech fragment, followed by the big band loping through what inevitably winds up sounding like movie music, a bit too somber as if that's the necessary emotion. [29:02] [5]

Oliver Nelson's Big Band: *Live From Los Angeles* (1967, Impulse -05) Your basic big band brass orgy -- four trumpets, four trombones, six saxes (including Nelson's soprano), piano, guitar, bass, drums -- staffed by west coast stalwarts who checked their cool at the door; not much of a swingfest, but the brass pyrotechnics are thrilling. [8]

Oliver Nelson & Steve Allen: *Soulful Brass* (1968, Impulse) Allen seamlessly picks up the electric harpsichord so it takes a while before you recognize how much shlockier his is -- specifically, "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," magnificent even here. Allen might have been deemed a Renaissance Man but TV exposure made it look like all the things he could do were some kind of camp -- and that's what he winds up playing off of here. Nelson, of course, makes the joke even grander, not because he has a sense of humor but because he always makes everything grander. [6]

Steve Nelson

Steve Nelson: *Fuller Nelson* (1998, Sunnyside -04) Nelson is one of the major vibraphone players of the last twenty years, but has little out under his own name; this one is a reprise of the same vibes-piano-bass trio that recorded *Full Nelson* in 1989, with Ray Drummond on bass and Kirk Lightsey wickedly sharp on piano. [+]

Willie Nelson

Willie Nelson: *Stardust* (1977, Columbia/Legacy -99) [10]

Willie Nelson: *Without a Song* (1983, Columbia) Another mild-mannered standards rehash, done with a minimum of fuss and bother, the only thing that breaks with the genteel strum and twang is guest

Julio Iglesias on "As Time Goes By," which he dispenses with his bombast. [5]

Willie Nelson: *Healing Hands of Time* (1994, Liberty) Another standards album -- even if six are by Nelson himself, most are as familiar as "All the Things You Are" and "I'll Be Seeing You"; massive string orchestras aren't my idea of how to do anything, but they offset a truly remarkable voice. [5]

Willie Nelson: *Nacogdoches* (1997, Pedernales -04) Sold exclusive at Texas Roadhouse restaurants, a scrap session, billed as jazz but really old standards including another run through "Stardust"; actually his best such record except for his original *Stardust*, probably because he enjoys the company and has nothing at stake. [9]

Willie Nelson: *Stardust [Legacy Edition]* (1976-90, Columbia/Legacy 2CD -08) Nelson's 1978 album of venerable Tin Pan Alley standards marked his emergence as a great interpretive singer, and was his bestseller to boot; the first disc doesn't tamper with the short original 10-cut package, so it remains as pristine as ever; the bonus cherry picks 16 similar cuts from 9 albums, a little more scattered, but better as a whole than his occasional more explicit returns to the *Stardust* formula. [9]

Zim Ngqawana

SAN Featuring Zim Ngqawana: *San Song* (1995, Nor CD -97) South African saxophonist, won a scholarship to the US, studied under Archie Shepp and Yusef Lateef, somehow got routed back through Norway on his return, where he died in 2011. Paired here with saxophonist Bjørn Ole Solberg, backed by Andile Yenana on piano, Flaten on bass, and Paal Nilssen-Love on drums, they bury any hint of sax jive in a mainstream turn that grows to smoldering intensity. [8]

Zim Ngqawana: *Ingoma* (1999, Sheer Sound -00) Band here includes two Norwegians -- Flaten and drummer Paal Nilssen-Love -- plus poet Lefifi Tladi and South Africans on trumpet and piano; some jazz, some jive, some chant, some verse, a pretty good drum solo. [6]

Albert Nicholas

Albert Nicholas: *Albert's Back in Town* (1959, Delmark -01) Sparsely documented New Orleans clarinetist (1900-73), played for King Oliver 1925-27, with Luis Russell, Jelly Roll Morton, Mezz Mezzrow, and here on a visit to Chicago with Art Hodes' All-Star Stompers, including Floyd O'Brien on trombone, Mike Wallbridge on tuba, and a young Marty Grosz on guitar; superb trad jazz, especially the clarinet. [9]

Keith Nichols

Keith Nichols Cotton Club Gang and Janice Day with Guy Barker: *I Like to Do Things for You* (1991, Stomp Off -92) Delightful old-fashioned small group swing, with singer Janice Day playing the flapper girl to a tee. The male vocals (Nichols himself, someone named Johnny M, maybe the Happidrome Trio) don't have anywhere near the same appeal, but the music holds up, and the instrumental cuts are full of marvelous wit -- Graham Read holds up the bottom end with tuba, sousaphone, and bass sax -- no string bass here, the only strings being Mike Piggott's spare-but-welcome violin and quite a bit of banjo. However, I didn't notice Barker's cornet much. [+]

Red Nichols

Red Nichols & Miff Mole (1925-27, Retrieval -98): Originally recorded by The [Six] Hottentots, The Arkansas Travellers, and most famously The Original Memphis Five, all recorded by white jazz legends in New York; Nichols was a cornet player from Utah, known later for his Five Pennies; these early cuts with Mole on trombone and others including Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet hit such a consistent mild-mannered groove they constitute an oasis of cool in the hot jazz desert. [9]

Walter Norris

Walter Norris: *Love Every Moment* (1992, Concord -93) One of those well-regarded pianists I hadn't gotten around to, now I find myself with three albums in the backlog, so I pulled this one out mostly to get it out of my face. Piano trio with Putter Smith (bass) and Larance Marable (drums); don't know Smith but Marable has been around, notably as part of Charlie Haden's Quartet West. Smart, solid, skillful record. [+]

The Walter Norris Duo: *Hues of Blues* (1995, Concord) Featuring George Mraz, the bassist. Just piano and bass isn't likely to do much for me, but it's hard to find fault with either, and the least bit of attention is amply rewarded. [9]

Anita O'Day

Anita O'Day and Billy May: *Swing Rodgers and Hart* (1960, Verve -04) A sequel to their better known Cole Porter album, with the artists working hard to keep up a proper level of frivolity, running with odd ("To Keep My Love Alive") and charming ("Ten Cents a Dance") songs; she sounds fine, his band sounds as anonymous as ever, and the strings don't help. [5]

Anita O'Day: *Have a Merry Christmas With Anita O'Day* (1942-70, Kayo Stereophonic -EP -13) Seven songs from 1970, well past her prime but she turned out to be so tenacious she called her last album *Indestructible!* (2006), plus a 1942 radio shot of "The Christmas Song"; [6]

Olatunji

Olatunji: *Drums of Passion [Legacy Edition]* (1959-66, Columbia/Legacy 2CD -09) One of the first albums of African music to appear in the US, no doubt because Babatunde Olatunji, a Yoruba from southwest Nigeria, got a scholarship to study at Morehouse College in Georgia, then moved on to New York, where he set up his percussion ensemble as a side project while studying public administration. With its dense percussion and crude, chantlike vocals, this seems geared to contemporary stereotypes of Africa, but it doesn't pander: it stands tall and forthright. The album became a huge bestseller. The band expanded, with some notable jazz names joining in on the bonus tracks: Clark Terry, Yusef Lateef, Jerome Richardson, Bud Johnson, Ray Barretto. Second disc features the long-out-of-print *More Drums of Passion*. Cut 7 years later, it seems less of a novelty, especially with the irresistible groove of "Mbira." [9]

Ruth Olay

Ruth Olay: *Olay! O.K.!* (1963, Essential Media Group -09) A jazz singer from Los Angeles, recorded

a dozen albums from 1956-66, this the only one even marginally in print; nothing on the nondescript string orchestra -- maybe they're in a witness protection program? -- but the singer has remarkable poise. [6]

Pauline Oliveros

Pauline Oliveros: *Crone Music* (1989, Lovely Music -90) Accordion and electronics, in very minimal rises and fades of tone. Written as background to a performance of "Lear," it unwinds in one long sequence. Only occasionally does the accordion, normally processed through various electronics, emerge as itself; when it does, interest in the piece inches up a bit. This is rather nice, but there's not a lot here. [5]

Greg Osby

Greg Osby: *The Invisible Hand* (1999, Blue Note -00) Long on ballads. Slow on ballads, too. [4]

Tony Oxley

Tony Oxley: *The Baptised Traveler* (1969, Columbia -99) UK import, doesn't sound like anything Wynton Marsalis' label would release. Granted crown status by *The Penguin Guide*. Oxley is one of Europe's top avant-garde drummers. His mates here include Evan Parker, Kenny Wheeler, Derek Bailey, and Jeff Cline (bass -- only Cline needs any introduction). While all of the pieces are impeccably free, the first long one is most strident, while the second long one hangs back for more melodic texture, as does the third short one. Although it's taken a while to sink in, I like the chemistry between Parker and Wheeler, and I've gotten to where I find the racked of the first cut invigorating. The second piece, one written by Charlie Mariano, is more atmospheric, with Parker in particular doing some nice tone work. This seems a bit slight to be a "crown" album -- not to mention short at 38:41 -- but it is interesting work, and the drummer gives you quite a bit to think about. Not sure about Bailey. [+]

Hot Lips Page

Hot Lips Page: *An Introduction to Hot Lips Page: His Best Recordings 1929-1945* (1929-45, Best of Jazz -97) Given name Oran Thaddeus Page (1908-54), played trumpet with Walter Page's Blue Devils and sang in his own 1938-40 small swing groups, good for 12 of 22 cuts here; the rest come from bands Page joined, with singers like Jimmy Rushing and Billie Holiday, leaders like Chu Berry, Artie Shaw, Pete Johnson, Albert Ammons, and Sidney Bechet. [8]

Charlie Parker

The Charlie Parker Story (1945, Savoy -95) His first studio session, famed for producing "Koko" among the six cuts; stretched out with false starts and chatter. [4]

Charlie Parker: *1946 Jazz at the Philharmonic Concert* (1946, Verve -92) Parker dominates the cover, if not the show; cover also notes "featuring": Dizzy Gillespie, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins. [+]

Charlie Parker & Dizzy Gillespie: *Diz 'n Bird at Carnegie Hall* (1947, Blue Note -97) Five quintet tracks closing with "Koko," then Gillespie brings his big band on for ten more tracks, replacing Parker with Howard Johnson and John Brown; sound is fair, enough to convey the excitement of the big band if not full detail. [5]

Charlie Parker: *Charlie Parker Memorial: Volume 1* (1947, Savoy -93) Originally a 1955 post-mortem best-of, later padded with false starts. [+]

Charlie Parker: *The Complete Savoy and Dial Studio Recordings* (1944-48, Atlantic 8CD -00) It's all here, in exhaustive detail with all the false starts and mishaps, but at least none of the air shots and bootlegs; in a nice, slim package with a 92-page booklet; indispensable for scholars, overkill for anyone else. [9]

Charlie Parker: *Washington D.C., 1948* (1948, Uptown -08) Easily the most extensively documented jazz musician in history, with a smattering of legendary studio recordings and a huge number of more/less bootleg-quality live tapes, some no more than the alto sax solos cut out from the performance. Aficionados devour them all. I've never quite seen the point: even when Parker is at his most inspired, he adds little to what we already know from crisper sounding and better supported studio work. This new discovery starts with a very ordinary 7:39 bebop exercise led by Ben Lary and Charlie Walp, then spruces the group up by adding Parker and Buddy Rich, who both make a world of difference. Later the group drops down to a quartet, running through "Ornithology" and "KoKo," then they finish with a "Dixieland vs. Bebop" joust with Tony Parenti, Wild Bill Davison, and Benny Morton on "C Jam Blues." Nice solos by Rich and Parenti, and the aficionados won't be disappointed with Bird. [6]

Charlie Parker: *The Bird Returns* (1948-49, Savoy -03) From his Dial contract, quickly cashing in with a greatest hits live. [+]

Charlie Parker: *1949 Jazz at the Philharmonic* (1949, Verve -93) Another package show, with Lester Young, Roy Eldridge, Buddy Rich, and Ella Fitzgerald. [5]

Charlie Parker Quintet: *Bird & Fats -- Live at Birdland* 1950 (1950, Cool & Blue) Another one of those anemic bootlegs meant to capture every last sacred breath that Bird blew. Not the worst of sound, although Fats sure doesn't catch many breaks. And Bird does get in his licks, as does the piano player (Bud Powell). [5]

Charlie Parker With Strings: *The Master Takes* (1949-50, Verve -95) Like Bix Beiderbecke, Parker was an ill-fated hick who aspired to good taste, so he thought playing with a classical string section would be the heights of sophistication; it turned out to be a formula for dreck, but at least his ballad tone had matured, and was rarely better recorded. [4]

Charlie Parker: *The Complete Live Performances on Savoy* (1947-50, Savoy Jazz 4CD -98) The complete Royal Roost recordings with all the Symphony Sid you can stand, plus the earlier Carnegie Hall date and a later one in Chicago; neatly packaged for those who got to have it all. [+]

Charlie Parker: *Bird at St. Nick's* (1950, Debut/OJC -92) Dreadful sound, just sax and drums. [3]

Charlie Parker: *Swedish Schnapps* (1949-51, Verve) One of the hottest, best-sounding live shots. [9]

Charlie Parker: *The Complete Legendary Rockland Palace Concert* (1952, Jazz Classics 2CD -96) Parker loved the idea of recording with strings, but the string sections were so awful the records

invariably disappoint; this latterday discovery is the exception, partly because the strings are underrecorded, mostly because Bird blows them away. [9]

Charlie Parker: *South of the Border* (1948-52, Verve -95) Early cuts with Machito's big band, small groups with bongos (José Mangual) and congas (Luis Miranda), Chico O'Farrill's overwrought 17-minute "Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite" with Mario Bauza and Chino Pozo next to Sweets Edison and Buddy Rich, Parker plays "catch up" rather than "leap ahead" and it suits him. [8]

Yardbird Suite: The Ultimate Charlie Parker Collection (1945-52, Rhino 2CD -97) Padded with Dizzy Gillespie up front and the Rockland strings date at the end; in between this rates as the best Parker introduction ever -- intersects heavily with *Genius*, but also includes a taste of the later Verves and much less live material; besides, the padding makes a fine bonus. [10]

Charlie Parker: *Big Band* (1950-53, Verve -99) Joe Lipman arranged the first ten tracks, standards with section blare over drippy strings, the sort of thing that makes you wish for a magic button to record only the soloist -- Parker himself seems exceptionally fit; Gil Evans had a hand on the other three songs, but so did Dave Lambert, and the eleven extra takes wear out their welcome real fast. [4]

Charlie Parker: *At Storyville* (1953, Blue Note -88) Two live broadcasts, one with Red Garland's trio, the other a quintet with Sir Charles Thompson and Herb Pomeroy on trumpet, Roy Haynes and Kenny Clarke the drummers; came out in 1985 and totals 40:21; half Parker pieces + "Groovin' High," typical runs with little else, nothing stretched past 5:05. [5]

Charlie Parker: *Now's the Time* (1952-53, Verve -90) Dumped onto CD in 1990, with "the Quartet of Charlie Parker" sketched across the front cover bottom, these two quartet sessions -- one with Hank Jones and Teddy Kotick, the other with Al Haig and Percy Heath, both with Max Roach -- appeared first on LP (MGV 8005) as *The Genius of Charlie Parker, #3: Now's the Time*, probably c. 1956-57, with the same song order, including back-to-back alternate takes, usually annoying but here considered the tribute such genius demands: true fans will want to examine every precious note. The CD is out of print now, supplanted by Verve's 1998 "Master Edition" -- sometimes called *Hi-Fi* (the words do appear on the front cover) but more often just *Charlie Parker* -- expanded with even more alternate takes, shuffled to the end this time, and a couple extra septet tracks. One big problem with Parker is that even before you sink into the live shots and bootlegs the sound quality of Parker's studio work was rarely good and often awful, but these relatively late sessions sound fine. The two pianists are superb, the bass is nicely balanced, and Max Roach was one of the few drummers who could make bebop work. Parker himself, his death less than three years ahead and his prime more than three years past, is relaxed and fit -- I wouldn't say passionate or fast, but for once his tone warms up the opening standard ("The Song Is You") and he negotiates the changes on his own pieces impeccably well. This is, in short, the mature Parker, the sort of record he might have kept making into old age. It's just that, at 32, he already was old -- about as old as he was ever going to get. [9]

Charlie Parker (1947-53, Verve -98) Part of the Verve Master Edition series, this supplanted Verve's 1990 *Now's the Time* CD, a point made by placing the cover pic of the old CD on the back cover here. The remasters come from Verve's truly laborious 10-CD *The Complete Charlie Parker on Verve*, with the Quartets padded out to 25 cuts through the addition of vaguely related tracks -- one from 1947 is a dateline outlier, a Carnegie Hall quartet with Hank Jones, Ray Brown, and Shelly Manne -- with all the scraps shuffled to the back of the bus. In pure musical value, not a lot to favor one over the other, but despite the detritus this is the cleanest sounding Parker disc ever, and people (like me) who squirm at

the grunginess of nearly everything else he recorded will appreciate that. Much improved documentation, too. [9]

The Quintet: *Jazz at Massey Hall* (1953, Debut/OJC Remasters -12) Invariably filed under alto saxophonist Charlie Parker's name, even though he was billed at the Toronto venue as Charlie Chan. For Parker followers, this is the most easily overrated album of all time, partly because the all-star cast -- Dizzy Gillespie on trumpet, Bud Powell on piano, Charles Mingus on bass, and Max Roach on drums -- suggests more than can possibly be delivered, and partly because this has long had pride of place as Parker's first live bootleg: an authorized boot, in fact, recorded by Mingus for the Debut label he and Roach founded, the only musician-owned label of the day. And it's been reissued promiscuously ever since, often with "the greatest jazz concert ever" slapped across the cover. It originally appeared on two 10-inch LPs, made it to 12-inch at least by 1962, and CD in 1989, and the sound was so lousy that Mingus re-recorded his bass parts. In 2003 the Spanish label Jazz Factory released *Complete Jazz at Massey Hall* under Parker's name, expanding the 46:07 album to 72:25. This year's OJC remaster reverts to the canonical 6-song format, with markedly improved sound and a lot of crowd ambiance. Starts with Ellington's "Perdido" vamp, runs through three Gillespie pieces, none of Parker's tunes, and he's not all that prominent. At the time, there was a *Vol. 2* with just the rhythm section -- even here, Powell is the most consistent performer, and Mingus made damn well certain that you could hear the bass -- but that's largely fallen by the wayside. It seems history has followed the Dean Benedetti rule: turn the machine off whenever Parker sits out. [6]

Charlie Parker: *Complete Jazz at Massey Hall* (1953, Jazz Factory -03) Released in Spain the moment the 50-year-limit copyright clock ran out, a sane law especially considering that all the stars are long dead. The extra minutes (72 vs. 46) mostly come from the Trio, when the horns took a break and let Bud Powell steal the show -- material that Debut had released separately at the time. The sound is more natural and open -- evidently the bass overdubs were scrubbed -- and without the rush I found myself noticing Chan more (and Gillespie less): terrific solo on "All the Things You Are"; pretty good one on "Hot House." Clearly not such a slouch as I sometimes think, and not dead yet, either. [8]

Charlie Parker: *Bird [Original Motion Picture Soundtrack]* (1945-88, Columbia) Produced by Lenny Niehaus for Clint Eastwood's Charlie Parker biopic, extracting Parker leads from the 1940s (but also note alto sax credits for Donald Harrison and Charles McPherson), cleaning them up, mixing them with contemporary musicians -- Ray Brown and Ron Carter on bass, Barry Harris and David Hazeltine on piano, John Guerin and Tony Reedus on drums, Red Rodney as himself, and who else but Jon Faddis as Dizzy Gillespie? -- and dubbing in crowd noise where the plot called for it. Requires some suspension of disbelief, as did the movie -- which was worth it, and within which this simulacrum of history was essential. If I revered *Bird* I might get upset, but this gives you the basic idea about as pleasantly as possible. [6]

Evan Parker

Evan Parker: *The Snake Decides* (1986, Psi -03) Four pieces of solo soprano saxophone, long lines of circular breathing with amazing harmonics and modulations. [+]

Evan Parker: *The Ayes Have It* (1983-91, Emanem -01) Starts with four trio exercises from 1983 with Parker spinning out elegantly abstract saxophone runs; concludes with a 36-minute quartet piece, with Walter Wierbos' trombone power for counterpoint; Parker's discography runs over 200 albums, but this

one lives up to his rep as one of the most formidable improvisers of our times. [9]

Evan Parker: *Chicago Solo* (1995, Okkadisk -97) Fourteen short (1:44) to medium (8:34) sized pieces, only four over 5:00. It probably helps that Parker played tenor sax for this one -- both less likely to screech and less likely to show off his circular breathing (although there is some). Like many solo sax records, this has a bit of the feel of practice: it mostly breaks down to technique, deployed in all sorts of permutations. Impressive in principle, utility marginal, not a lot of fun (when is Parker ever fun?). [+]

Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble: *Toward the Margins* (1996, ECM -97) Simple enough in concept: the Parker Trio (Barry Guy and Paul Lytton, you know) meet violinist-electronics buff Philipp Wachsmann and two more knobmen for discrete pleasures. I kept expecting more from the trio, although it's likely that Guy's bass merges into the strings base and Parker's soprano sax burrows into the electronics. Slow, textural. Just let it be and it starts to sweep you away, not unlike a glacier. [6]

Evan Parker/Barry Guy/Paul Lytton and Marilyn Crispell: *After Appleby* (1999, Leo -2CD -00) The English avant-garde's long-running sax trio plus an explosive American pianist who works more frequently with bassist Guy; this runs long, and Parker's inside out technique limits the sonic range but the group makes a lot out of it. [8]

Knocky Parker

Knocky Parker/Dick Wellstood/Galvanized Washboard Band: *In Gay Old New Orleans* (1949-68, GHB -89) The generally useful liner notes fail to mention the recording dates for this ramshackle collection, so I'm doing some guesswork. The first six cuts feature pianist Parker -- from Texas, mostly played ragtime and western swing -- and were released on GHB's first 10-inch LP. (The label was founded by George H. Buck in 1949, so if not then soon afterwards.) Two solo rags, a blues with drums, "Grandpa's Spells" with bass and drums, "Wolverine Blues" with oom-pah trombone, a trad jazz group cut. Wellstood is another pianist, a retro swing guy from Connecticut, but he only gets two cuts: one with washboard, the other adding horns, notably Joe Muranyi's clarinet. Wellstood recorded from 1947 to his death in 1987, so those cuts could have come any time, but my guess is early. That leaves 14 cuts from a band with washboard, banjo, tuba, trombone, cornet (Peter Ecklund), and clarinet (Tommy Sancton). The only clue here is that Sancton is described as "a nineteen year-old clarinetist from New Orleans"; he was born in 1949, so I figure 1968. They quickly make you forget wondering where the piano went, and Sancton is especially superb. [8]

Leo Parker

Leo Parker: *Let Me Tell You 'Bout It* (1961, Blue Note -90) Parker was a baritone saxophonist who came up through Billy Eckstine's transitional bebop band. But he also dabbled in jump blues, and counts Illinois Jacquet as an influence. His late '40s recordings have started to surface in European comps. Aside from that, the only records in his name seem to be two 1961 dates for Blue Note, cut just before he died at age 37. This is the first one, cut with a sextet including no one else I've heard of: John Burks (trumpet), Bill Swindell (tenor sax), Yusef Salim (piano), Stan Conover (bass), Purnell Rice (drums). Perhaps it is the case that the bebop and jump blues cancel each other out, leaving this as a typical period mainstream work: it jumps and bops, but mostly it swings. Good, solid work. [+]

William Parker

William Parker: *Through Acceptance of the Mystery Peace* (1974-79, Eremita -03) These are early recordings, mostly collected and released on Parker's own Centering Records label in 1981. The new edition adds a fifth piece and expands "Desert Flower" to full length (19:42). "Desert Flower" is rich with brass, with a superb solo by Daniel Carter. The previously unreleased title piece is built on two violins, cello, and flute, without Parker playing. This is probably the toughest piece on the album, the violins piercing and the cello not quite enough bottom. "Rattles and Bells and the Light of the Sun" features solos by Charles Brackeen and Jemeel Moondoc. "Commitment" is built simply around Parker's bass, with Arthur Williams on trumpet and John Hagen on tenor sax, each taking solos before Parker. The solos are excellent: Williams taking a precise, almost pointilistic approach, while Hagen is more in the Coltrane/Gayle mode. Good piece, although at 18:36 it starts to lose interest. "Face Still Hands Folded" finds Parker thoughtfully reciting over a pair of violins, including Billy Bang. [4]

William Parker: *Centering: Unreleased Early Recordings 1976-1987* (1976-87, No Business -6CD -12) The great bassist of my generation -- he turned sixty back in January -- Parker spent most of the 1980s piling up side credits, which ran close to 300 last time I counted, probably more like 400 now. His own discography only picks up around 1993, with 1995's *Compassion Seizes Bed-Stuy* a breakthrough, and 1998's *The Peach Orchard* a triumph. But we now know that he experimented widely from 1974 on -- the 2003 release of *Through Acceptance of the Mystery Peace* picked up bits from 1974-79 -- and he released limited runs on his own Centering label. The Lithuanian label NoBusiness collected his 1980-83 recordings with Jason Kao Hwang as *Commitment* in 2010 (cf. *The Complete Recordings 1981/1983*), and now they've gone much further with this lavish, lovely box set. The first three discs feature intimate groups with saxophonists Daniel Carter, David S. Ware, and Charles Gayle -- the latter some of the finest free sax blowing I've heard -- followed by a short (13:51) song set with vocalists Ellen Christi and Lisa Sokolov. The last three discs move into larger groups, ranging from the atmospheric dance accompaniment to the Big Moon Ensemble, one of the most explosive free big bands I've heard. [9]

William Parker: *Song Cycle* (1991, Boxholder -01) Six tracks are duets with Parker and vocalist Ellen Christi. The other nine tracks have Parker, Yuko Fujiyama on piano, and vocalist Lisa Sokolov. As far as I know, this is the only vocal-centered album that Parker did before *Raining on the Moon*, with which it shares several songs. "A Thought for Silence" is an odd (and IMHO rather annoying) bass-voice duet, where Parker bows and Christi just moves her voice around exaggerating Parker's melody. [4]

William Parker: *Testimony* (1994, Zero In -95) Weighing in over 78 minutes, this is bound to be too long -- I mean, the occasional bass solo can be nice, but anything approaching 10 minutes is likely to challenge our attention spans, and anything in excess of an hour is bound to be ridiculous. But here we go: "Sonic Animation" (22:58, mostly arco, it actually has a sort of hypnotic effect, gently sawing back and forth around an inscrutable melody; so far, so good); "Testimony" (11:22, dedicated to Beb Guerin, an unfamiliar French bassist who has worked with Dave Burrell, Grachan Moncur III, Sonny Sharrock, Archie Shepp, Clifford Thornton; carefully picked out, with some clicks for percussive contrast; the piece is well settled in the lower register, thoughtful, vibrant); "Light #3" (3:51, by contrast this piece is very high-pitched, so much so that the instrument can generate very little volume); "Dedication" (15:38, "for Charles Clark -- 1945-1969; for Albert Stinson -- 1945-1969"; again, mostly bowed, highly concentrated and thoughtful; toward the end this runs through several series of swaying, sawing

sequences); "The 2nd Set" (24:09; gee, that slipped by fast). Not what I'd call difficult at all -- eminently listenable, often interesting, occasionally fascinating. [+]

William Parker: *Compassion Seizes Bed-Stuy* (1995, Homestead -96) Top of front cover, beside "William Parker", has the words "In Order to Survive." Explains inside: "The music on this CD is the third part of a sound trilogy. The first part 'In Order to Survive' is music for sextet. The second part 'Testimony' is music for solo bass. They all speak about embracing and making a commitment to life in its highest partial. . . . It is through poetry and vision that life is discovered; discovered, and then altered. The premise was to start a human revolution. To bring dreams closer to present day reality. The music called Jazz is less than 100 years old; too young to repeat itself. We as a society have only progressed technically during these years. There is a lack of respect for life that is called style. Driven by greed, selfishness, and arrogance. We still practice capitalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism. These concepts are the main reasons for the deterioration of America. What has trickled down is mass ignorance, lack of concern and severe blindness mixed with inflated egos. There is a total loss of memory as to how America was born. That is, by the genocide of the Native Americans. How can we ever make that one right?" Quartet: Parker (bass), Susie Ibarra (drums), Rob Brown (alto sax), Cooper Moore (piano). I still have a lot more Parker to get to, but this relatively early set seems masterful to me. [9]

William Parker: *Lifting the Sanctions* (1997, No More -98) Solo albums in jazz are rare -- excluding piano, very rare. Solo bass albums are among the rarest: I doubt that there are more than a couple dozen anywhere. This is Parker's second, lighter and more varied than 1994's *Testimony*, which is more intense. Useful for students, especially given the liner notes. Parker prefers the bow for his solo work, but I find his plucked "Macchu Picchu" to be the most gratifying piece here. [+]

Other Dimensions in Music Special Quintet w/Matthew Shipp: *Time Is of the Essence Is Beyond Time* (1997, AUM Fidelity -99) William Parker group, predecessor to his Quartet, with two horns -- Roy Campbell trumpet, Daniel Carter sax -- spinning free, Rashid Bakr on drums; normally pianoless, but here add Matthew Shipp, knocking them around a bit rather than pulling them together. [5]

William Parker & the Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra: *Sunrise in the Tone World* (1997, AUM Fidelity -2CD) This is a big group: the back cover lists 26 musicians plus Parker. Still, the first track ("Sunrise in the Tone World") sails through elegantly, with light instrumental interplay and voices. The second piece, "The Bluest J," seems more typical of such large avant-garde groupings, with interesting sounds competing against a lot of backdrop. Long, too (26:05). All these pieces have a lot of interesting shit going on, and given the large ensemble it's inevitable that the horns dominate. On "Mayan Space Station" the trombones stand out. All in all, the first side holds together pretty well. However, the 40:10 opener on the second disc, "Huey Sees Light Through a Leaf," does wander quite a bit, threatening to decompose into the usual avant void, and the second disc never quite rights itself. Maybe they got a little tired? [5]

William Parker/In Order to Survive: *The Peach Orchard* (1997-98, AUM Fidelity 2CD) Quartet with Cooper-Moore (piano), Rob Brown (alto sax), Susie Ibarra (drums), with Assif Tsahar guesting on bass clarinet on "Posium Pendasem #3." The first disc is intense, with a lot to listen to from all, but it may make the most sense to try to concentrate on Parker, even when Cooper-Moore is dazzling. Parker's duet with Ibarra on "Moholo" (obviously a title with a drummer in mind) is particularly good. "The Peach Orchard" itself starts out with a stretch of Rob Brown screech -- not bad as these things go,

but tougher listening than most of the album -- on top of Cooper-Moore's repetitive rhythm, which continues well past the sax solo. About midway Parker gets an arco solo, recapitulating Cooper-Moore's rhythm, with occasional shots from piano and drums: it all makes for a rather intense piece. The second disc is more of the same, but "Theme From Pelikan" seems to follow a slightly more regular beat, giving it an agreeable funkiness -- and Rob Brown and Susie Ibarra have a lot of fun with it. [10]

Other Dimensions in Music: *Now!* (1998, AUM Fidelity) Quartet of Roy Campbell (trumpet), Daniel Carter (sax, flute, trumpet), William Parker (bass), Rashid Bakr (drums). Starts with a 33:00 piece, "For the Glass Tear/After Evening's Orange," which takes its own sweet time to skip around the edges of collaboration, starting with a lot of Roy Campbell trumpet and winding down with a little too much Daniel Carter flute. The next piece is called "Tears for the Boy Wonder (For Winston Marsalis)" -- starts with a bass solo, then slowly adds trumpet and sax. The following pieces rather slip by, but the finale, "Steve's Festive Visions Revisited" wakes everyone back up. [5]

Harry Partch

The Harry Partch Collection, Volume 1 (1949-55, CRI) I used to have a Columbia LP called *The World of Harry Partch*, which would no doubt be the place to start if Columbia just had the good sense to keep it in print. Partch was one of those great American weirdos -- take a little Frank Lloyd Wright, add a lot of Rube Goldberg, and transpose to music. He didn't just invent his own system of notation: he invented his own notes, and the instruments to play them. Most of those instruments were turned percussion, which sometimes combined with the strings to sound Chinese. The great piece here is "Castor & Pollux" -- something everyone should hear, once anyway. Trouble comes when he adds voice, which is best kept spoken. [+]

The Harry Partch Collection, Volume 2 (1958-82, CRI) The usual interesting percussion, but too much libretto. [5]

The Harry Partch Collection, Volume 3 (1958-72, CRI) The usual interesting percussion, but way too much libretto. [4]

John Patton

John Patton: *Soul Connection* (1983, Just a Memory) Soul jazz organist, had a strong run with Blue Note in the 1960s, trouble finding work thereafter, picked up this session in Switzerland -- his only record between 1969 and 1993 -- with guitarist Melvin Sparks consistently in the groove, and trombonist Grachan Moncur III interesting even when off on his own; boogaloo with brains. [7]

Les Paul

Les Paul: *How High the Moon* (1937-51, ASV -02) One 1937 cut ("Just Because"), the rest start from 1944 and cluster towards 1951. Two things here: light, cheesy vocals on light, cheesy pop tunes, not all of which are attributed to Mary Ford; some pretty slick guitar, even if it is light and cheesy too. From what little I've heard, I like Paul a lot better than I like Chet Atkins, who somehow managed to make his lightness sound high falutin' anyway. This seems like a decent introduction, but I wouldn't mind hearing an instrumental album either. And remember that the 1951 cutoff date here is just something

the lawyers imposed. [+]

Les Paul with Mary Ford: *The Best of the Capitol Masters: 90th Birthday Edition* (1948-57, Capitol -05) Judging from his 1944 Jazz at the Philharmonic performance, he could have become a major jazz guitarist, but he broke through as a novelty artist instead, playing mad scientist against the light, sweet voice of his straight lady. [9]

Mario Pavone

Mario Pavone: *Toulon Days* (1991, New World -92) With Thomas Chapin (alto sax), Joshua Redman (tenor sax), Steve Davis (trombone), Hotep Idris Galeta (piano), Steve Johns (drums), Marty Ehrlich (clarinet and flute, two cuts). Pavone plays bass; I regard him as an important player. This is earlier than his other albums I'm familiar with. Recently he's been reliving his experience with Chapin, so this points in that direction. [+]

Annette Peacock

Annette Peacock: *Mama Never Taught Me How to Cook: The Aura Years* (1978-82, Castle -04) Married first to Gary Peacock then to Paul Bley, she was more of a gadfly and joker than jazz musician, although Bley and Marilyn Crispell wound up recording whole albums of her songs. She started singing as input into the synthesizers that intrigued her and Bley, then cut several more/less rock albums in the '70s -- two collected here, plus some outtakes -- before fading away, as if she never conceived of anything as deliberate as a career. Still, her "rock shit" sounds remarkably like jazz even today. As a vocalist she's often thin and undisciplined, but she takes enormous dramatic risks with the title cut and her "Don't Be Cruel" cover. Elsewhere, as on "Survival," she lapses into softly rapped philosophizing that draws the music, a repetitive theme with improvised curlicues, up around her like a warm blanket. [10]

Gary Peacock

Gary Peacock and Bill Frisell: *Just So Happens* (1994, Postcards) Bass and guitar duets, some abstract, some based on such homespun themes as "Red River Valley" and "Home on the Range" -- the latter seems to point toward Frisell's later *Nashville*. [5]

Duke Pearson

Duke Pearson: *Sweet Honey Bee* (1966, Blue Note -04) With Freddie Hubbard (trumpet), James Spaulding (alto sax, flute), Joe Henderson (tenor sax), Ron Carter (bass), Mickey Roker (drums). Hard bop, sweet soul, standout trumpet, pretty good sax, articulate piano. [+]

Ken Peplowski

Ken Peplowski: *Mr. Gentle and Mr. Cool* (1990, Concord) As nice a slice of latterday mainstream as one could hope for -- obvious material, impeccable accompaniment. I don't know Peplowski well enough to take full measure of him, so I may be erring on the side of caution here. [+]

Ken Peplowski: *A Good Reed* (1997, Concord) A mixed bag: a small group for Peplowski's increasingly classical swing and Loren Schoenberg's big band for elaborately orchestral overkill. The small group version of Ellington's "Purple Gazelle" stands out. [5]

Art Pepper

Art Pepper: *Straight Life: The Savoy Sessions* (1952-54, Savoy -84) Pepper's earliest work was most clearly following in Charlie Parker's footsteps. Pepper had a much sweeter tone on alto sax than Parker, and he missed some of Parker's rhythmic quirks, giving him a smoother, more measured attack. Perhaps this was because his big band education was under Stan Kenton whereas Parker started with Jay McShann. But the program was much the same, and it's rarely less than tantalizing. [9]

Art Pepper: *Omega Sessions: The Complete Master Takes* (1957, Fresh Sound -05) Same as disc three on *Mosaic Select*, except omits three alternate takes but finds two cuts that Mosaic and Blue Note missed: "Blues Rock" and "Rock Blues," fair titles with Carl Perkins (the jazz pianist, not the rockabilly great) in full-tilt boogie mode. Booklet and artwork are superior, music is magnificent. [10]

Art Pepper: *Mosaic Select* (1956-57, Mosaic -3CD -05) Pepper never got comfortable. He spent most of his adult life in jail, and each time he got out he kicked his music up another level. The bushel of records he cut in the last four years of his life, after a long stretch in Sing Sing, are among the most amazing in jazz history. But these sessions, cut for Aladdin following a year in the Fort Worth slammer for narcotics, and followed quickly by his more famous *Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section*, were his first career peak. His previous recordings for Savoy revealed a sweet-toned Charlie Parker disciple, but here he recasts Parker in his own voice, much as he would later incorporate Coltrane. This box adds a couple of alternate takes to the three volumes that Blue Note previously released as *The Complete Art Pepper Aladdin Recordings*. The additions are minor, but the music is so vital it's unfathomable how it ever slipped out of print. [10]

Art Pepper: *Gettin' Together* (1960, Contemporary/OJC -84) As with his acclaimed 1957 album, *Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section*, Pepper trusts Miles Davis with his recruiting -- Paul Chambers is on both, with Wynton Kelly and Jimmy Cobb here -- but adds Conte Candoli on trumpet for a relatively carefree outing between his ambitious *Modern Jazz Classics* and the intense *Smack Up*; OJC edition adds two alternate takes that give Pepper the focus he needs. [8]

Art Pepper: *Art Pepper Today* (1978, Galaxy/OJC -90) Quartet with Stanley Cowell (piano), Cecil McBee (bass), and Roy Haynes (drums), less avant than usual for Cowell and McBee with two lovely standards ("Lover Come Back to Me" and "These Foolish Things") and several of Pepper's fast boppish pieces, less than spectacular only by his own standards. [8]

Art Pepper: *Winter Moon* (1980, Galaxy -05) Saxophone-with-strings has been a holy grail, sought by many but rarely with any success. The problem has usually been the strings. Charlie Parker and Coleman Hawkins played majestically against mediocre semiclassical string arrangements. One major exception is Stan Getz's *Focus*, where Eddie Sauter's arch-modernist strings actually steal the show. But no album combines the lush texturing of strings with saxophone more organically than this one. [10]

The Best of Art Pepper (1957-80, Contemporary -04) Too many riches to do justice to. *Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section* (1956) was a slapdash studio date with the back end of the Miles Davis

Quintet that turned to magic. *Art Pepper + Eleven* (1959) was Marty Paich's bible for west coast arrangers. *Smack Up* (1960) and *Intensity* (1960) were two quickies, the former sparring with Jack Sheldon, the latter just intense Pepper. *Gettin' Together* (1960) met up with another Miles Davis rhythm section. This sampler picks nine cuts from those five albums, making it a fair survey of Pepper's second period, but each of the albums stands perfectly straight on its own, and mixed together they get jumbled. But the last four cuts, from Pepper's final period (1975-82), barely scratch the surface, with two cuts from *Winter Moon* (1980) -- the most sublime sax plus strings ever recorded -- and none of his work with George Cables. Unbalanced and insufficient, but no complaints about any of the music. [9]

Art Pepper: *The Hollywood All-Star Sessions* (1979-82, Galaxy -5CD) When I asked the guy at the store, the only word he had for this was "gorgeous" -- then he went onto a disquisition that, with all due respect for Bird, concluded that Art Pepper was the one alto saxophonist he most enjoyed listening to. With all due respect for Jeep, he was pretty much preaching to the choir. But unlike Pepper's *Village Vanguard* box or most of the *Complete Galaxy* monster, Pepper has a lot of company for these sessions. That they work so well just serves to remind you that Pepper has never had trouble navigating heavy traffic. At least three of the discs are indeed non-stop gorgeous. Glad I asked. [9]

Ivo Perelman

Ivo Perelman: *Bendito of Santa Cruz* (1996, Cadence) Duo with Matthew Shipp, although Perelman dominates and Shipp barely manages to fill in. Perelman is capable of making some nasty noise, but more often than not he follows his melodic lines here, and on occasion (e.g., "Cana Fita") that can be charming. [+]

Ivo Perelman Duo Featuring Borah Bergman: *Geometry* (1996, Leo -97) Tenor sax-piano duets, the Brazilian leader in typically strong form working through free territory, the pianist -- who, by the way, passed away on Oct. 18 after a 35-year career -- attacking obliquely but having some trouble getting heard. [8]

Ivo Perelman/Marilyn Crispell/Gerry Hemingway/William Parker: *En Adir: Traditional Jewish Songs* (1996, Music & Arts -97) The songs may predate credits, but nothing here makes the first concession to klezmer. The Brazilian tenor saxophonist, relatively early in his career, claims the arranging credits, and indeed throws out a bit of melody before bouncing off the changes into the avant stratosphere, and the rhythm section does it all. [9]

The Ivo Perelman Quartet: *Sieiro* (1998, Leo) With Thomas Ulrich (cello), Dominic Duval (bass), Jay Rosen (drums). Ivo Perelman is a rather extreme free jazz saxophonist, and this has some wrenching moments. After some initial squealing, the first (title) cut settles down into a strangely convoluted Brazilian melody. "Rush Hour" then starts out with a comic motif -- a low note, then some high shit, repeated and played with until the high shit smears. It's a promising beginning, but the piece goes to hell before it's done. Next two cuts settle down a bit, and on "Arcos" the cello emerges in the lead for a bit, while Perelman comps behind it. "The Vermicello" is a short piece with a lot of healthy thrashing. Last piece is more of the same. Talented guy. Tough listening. [5]

Oscar Peterson

Oscar Peterson: *This Is Oscar Peterson* (1945-49, Bluebird 2CD -02) In case you're wondering how

Peterson got so fast and fluid, his earliest recordings show he practiced on boogie-woogie and fast stride; later on you he starts to develop his own expansive, exuberant style, one that served him well for another fifty years. [7]

Oscar Peterson: *Debut: The Clef/Mercury Duo Recordings 1949-1951* (1949-52, Verve 3CD -09) Last year Mosaic came up with a 7-CD box of *The Complete Clef/Mercury Studio Recordings of the Oscar Peterson Trio (1951-1953)*. Think of this set -- duos with either Ray Brown or Major Holley on bass -- as the other shoe dropping. Peterson had recorded in Canada, but made his US debut after midnight on one of Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic shows, recorded and released on a 10-inch LP as *Oscar Peterson at Carnegie*. The first disc adds three cuts from a return to Carnegie Hall a year later -- according to the book here, which differs from other sources which put both dates close together in 1950. Second disc adds two LPs from early 1950 sessions, *Tenderly* and *Keyboard*, the former mostly with Brown, the latter mostly with Holley. The third disc takes another LP, *An Evening With Oscar Peterson*, more duos with Brown except for a stray 1952 quartet cut, and tacks on six extra cuts -- only one, plus a newly discovered track from Carnegie Hall, previously unreleased. Masterful mainstream piano, closer to swing than to bop, not as tarted up as Tatum, but close, the bass adding harmonic depth to the strong piano leads. [8]

Oscar Peterson: *Plays the Jerome Kern Song Book* (1952-53, Verve -09) Part of the first round of songbook albums Peterson's trio cut for Norman Granz -- most of the series, but not Kern, were reprised in 1959; these were cut in marathon sessions to be sorted out later; classic standards, given a quick once-over that showcases Peterson's dazzling talent and effortless swing. [7]

Oscar Peterson: *Plays Count Basie* (1955, Verve -08) Peterson and Basie adored each other, but Peterson never bothered with the idea of leaving notes out, so this feels well fleshed out, especially with guitarist Herb Ellis filling out a quartet that includes Buddy Rich. [7]

Oscar Peterson With Strings: In a Romantic Mood (1955, Verve -08) One of the sillier ideas prevalent in the 1950s was that strings make a record romantic; another was that slow songs are even more so; Russ Garcia provides the strings here, turgid and vapid; makes you think about shooting everyone *but* the piano player. [2]

The Oscar Peterson Trio: *At the Stratford Shakespearean Festival* (1956, Verve -93) Strong, somewhat uneven showing from Peterson's famous trio with Herb Ellis on guitar and Ray Brown on bass, with features for each, patter, concert noise, and lots of delicious piano. [8]

The Oscar Peterson Trio: *At the Concertgebouw* (1957, Verve -94) Another live set with Ray Brown and Herb Ellis, more consistent and cleaner sounding than the Stratford date, with some dazzling speed pieces, often with Ellis out front. [9]

Oscar Peterson & Nelson Riddle (1963, Verve -09): Two supporting actors in search of a leader, which should be the pianist, but he's neither loud nor aggressive enough to take charge, leaving you with swarms of strings and flutes and the occasional puddle of piano. [3]

Oscar Peterson Trio: *With Respect to Nat* (1965, Verve -08) Manny Alban's big band cuts belie the Trio credit, but Cole's career was similarly split between trio and big band, and this album, cut shortly after Nat's death, meant nothing but respect; Peterson sings all but one cut, good enough you can imagine him taking a very different career, but not exactly superseding Cole. [7]

Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky

Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky: *SelbViert* (1979, FMP -80) Saxophonist, b. 1933 in Germany and wound up in the East after the war where he seems to have been an important figure, although the records I've noted him on have been free jazz efforts in the West, including his work with Globe Unity and Zentralquartett; this is a freewheeling quartet with Heinz Becker's trumpet bouncing off his soprano, alto, and clarinet, with Klaus Koch on bass and Günter Sommer on drums; rough at first, but one dare devil move after another works, improbably for sure. [8]

Michel Petrucciani

Michel Petrucciani: *100 Hearts* (1983, Blue Note -02) A freak, with stubby legs and arms that straddled the whole keyboard, he was built like an airplane, but close your eyes and see how sensitively this solo album is constructed, how elegantly it develops. [9]

The Michel Petrucciani Trio: *Live at the Village Vanguard* (1984, Blue Note -02) Framed with bass and drums, and the crowd, the piano still center, the concentration intense, the interaction welcome. [9]

Michel Petrucciani: *Solo Live* (1997, Dreyfus -98) Cut shortly before this marvelous pianist died. Not his very best, but still bracing. [+]

Esther Phillips

Esther Phillips: *Jazz Moods: Hot* (1972-75, Epic/Legacy -05) Well into a career that started as teenage Little Esther, this sticks to three out of nine albums she cut on Kudu, probably because those were the ones Creed Taylor powered with his facsimile of a jazz orchestra. An exceptionally strong singer with occasionally strong material. [+]

Flip Phillips

The Flip Phillips Quartet: *Live at the Beowulf* (1977-78, Arbors -2CD -04) Two quartets differing only on bass, recorded when Phillips was in his young sixties, well before he died at 86 in 2001. First disc kicks off swinging like you haven't heard in ages; second disc takes a pair of ballads before sliding back in gear. They don't make 'em like they used to. One reason is that now all the JATP jousts have passed on. [+]

Astor Piazzolla

The Rough Guide to Astor Piazzolla (1957-88, World Music Network -05) It's proper to regard the Argentine tango master as a composer -- indeed there are whole operas in his oeuvre -- but I prefer to think of him as a performer, more specifically an improviser on his ever present bandoneon. He rarely strayed from tango, but he turned it out in a vast assortment of ways, like a brilliant chef might turn out a panoply of ducks. The one early piece here is the odd one out, still feeling much like he wishes to dignify tango as a classical music, but when we jump into the '70s he's found a powerful groove, and in that his own distinct voice and mission. As an intro this is instructive and wide-ranging. [10]

Enrico Pieranunzi

Enrico Pieranunzi/Paul Motian: *Flux and Change* (1995, Soul Note) Piano and drums duo, with 23 pieces, nominally organized into three suites. The relationship of the suites isn't obvious, especially given that they include borrowed pieces like "St. Thomas" and "Straight No Chaser." But the piano and drums are clear enough. [+]

Adam Pieronczyk

Adam Pieronczyk/Ed Schuller/Jacek Kochan: *Plastinated Black Sheep* (1999, Not Two) Tenor sax trio, the leader not quite 30 but already a significant figure on Poland's free jazz scene; solid in all respects, even when Pieronczyk switches to soprano. [8]

Dave Pike

Dave Pike and His Orchestra: *Manhattan Latin* (1964, Verve -04) Cocktail vibes add to a rhythm section that includes Cachao and Patato, all wasted when they slow things down. [4]

Courtney Pine

Courtney Pine: *Journey to the Urge Within* (1986, Antilles) Black English saxophonist, has a background in reggae and funk bands, digs John Coltrane, and seems to straddle the great divide between crossover jazz and more purist mainstream approaches. This has some conventionally modern blowing, but also includes something like "Children of the Ghetto," a vocal featuring Susaye Greene backed by not-too-slick urban funk -- a respectable effort at what jazz-soul fusion can sound like and stay interesting. Another vocal is a scat matching up against rather minimal bass clarinet -- less successful. Some interesting experiments. [5]

Jean-Luc Ponty

Jean-Luc Ponty: *King Kong* (1969, Blue Note) Compositions by Frank Zappa, jazzed down to occasionally funky fusion. [5]

Chris Potter

Chris Potter Quintet: *Presenting Chris Potter* (1992, Criss Cross -93) He was 21 years old when he cut this his first album as a leader. The quintet lineup is well above first rate, with John Swana (trumpet), Kevin Hays (piano), Christian McBride (bass), and Lewis Nash (drums). He wrote six of eight songs, adding one each from Monk and Miles. Half of this fits the sobriquet "impressive debut"; the other half I'm less sure about. [+]

Chris Potter: *Moving In* (1996, Concord) Potter is a tenor saxophonist (also plays soprano on two tracks and bass clarinet on one) who's a little bit left of mainstream -- he plays frequently with Dave Douglas and Dave Holland. He's a very solid, Coltrane-ish player, although I often find his tone a little thin and metallic for my taste. His group here consists of Brad Mehldau (piano), Larry Grenadier (bass), and Billy Hart (drums) -- similar-minded players, first rate, very solid. [+]

Baden Powell

Baden Powell: *Live à Bruxelles* (1999, Sunnyside -05) Like Luiz Bonfá (q.v.), a legendary Brazilian guitarist; also solo with some vocals that aren't his strong point, but at the end of a long career, lending it a gravity that complicates things; very much an insider's album. [6]

Bud Powell

Bud Powell: *Jazz at Massey Hall: Volume Two* (1953, Debut/OJC -91) Six piano trio cuts from the famous Quintet show with Mingus and Roach but no horns, padded out with another ten cuts (including outtakes) with George Duvivier and Art Taylor; "Jubilee" offers Bud at his bounciest, but much of this falls flat, such as his attempt to comp behind Mingus' "Bass-ically Speaking" solo. [5]

The Bud Powell Trio: *Blues in the Closet* (1956, Verve -09) With Ray Brown and Osie Johnson, mostly bebop tunes (including Dizzy Gillespie's "Be-Bop" and "Woody n' You" and Monk's "52nd Street Theme"), played with typical flair. [7]

Bud Powell: *From Birdland, New York City, 1956* (1956, Jazz Anthology -90) Bebop pianist, had a tough life and is commonly thought to have been broken by this time, but it is possible to splendid recordings at least up to 1964 (he died in 1966); this is a live trio with Paul Chambers and Art Taylor, typical songbook, has its moments. [7]

The Amazing Bud Powell: The Scene Changes (1958, Blue Note -03) The word "amazing" is overused on Powell -- Art Tatum, who really was amazing, reckoned he could cut Powell with one hand, and Powell had to get really wasted to think otherwise; but what really distinguished Powell was how logically he developed his lines, and that has rarely been more clear than on the all-originals trio session, cut shortly before he moved to Paris. [9]

Bud Powell: *The Very Best* (1949-58, Blue Note -05) Three or four cuts each from the three most amazing volumes of *The Amazing Bud Powell* -- classic bop singles from 1949-53 and a 1958 session that proves that even if he had lost it by then he could still find it on occasion. Only the first two cuts have horns: Fats Navarro and a teenaged saxophone colossus named Sonny Rollins. [10]

Bud Powell: *Live at the Blue Note Café, Paris 1961* (1961, ESP-Disk -07) A good night out for the great but often depressed pianist, with strong support from Pierre Michelot and Kenny Clarke and bright guest appearance from tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims; the program is studded with dependable bebop standards he's done many times, so the pleasant surprises come elsewhere, like "Lover Man" and "There Will Never Be Another You." [7]

Bud Powell: *Parisian Thoroughfares* (1957-61, Pablo -03) This is the second installment in Pablo's repackaging of the tapes that Francis Paudras made of Powell during his last years in Paris -- more choice pickings from the ten Mythic Sound discs; like its predecessor, *Paris Sessions*, this jumps around a bit, mixing trios with guest horns -- Zoot Sims and Barney Wilen stand out; the sound is a bit dicier, but anyone who thinks Powell was done in the '40s has serious ear problems. [9]

Bud Powell: *Paris Sessions* (1957-64, Pablo -02) Powell is widely considered to be the greatest of bebop pianists, but he incurred a number of traumas in his short life, including a severe beating in 1945, shock treatments, and all sorts of drugs. In 1959 he relocated to Paris, where he was befriended by a fan, Francis Paudras, who managed to record twelve LPs worth of Powell performances. While it's

widely held that Powell's skills declined as time took its toll, there are at least exceptions to that rule: for one example, his guest spot on *Mingus at Antibes* (1960) is the apex of an astonishing record. This set selects highlights from the Paudras tapes, mostly just Powell trios, but a couple of cuts have guest horns. The sound is variable, but reportedly much improved over the LPs, and the music is instantly recognizable Powell, with the advantage that he gets to stretch out a bit compared to his legendary 78s. [9]

Bud Powell: *Bebop* (1948-64, Pablo -04) Third installment in the Francis Paudras tapes, one old airshot from the bebop revolution, like so many you've heard before, plus some later boptunes, like only Powell could play. [+]

Chano Pozo

Chano Pozo: *El Tambor de Cuba* (1939-53, Tumbao 3CD -01) Shot dead in New York at 33, Pozo enjoys an outsized legend as a rumba songwriter, a popular showman for his Afro chants and congas, and as the first star of Afro-Cuban jazz; each facet gets a full disc here, but only part of he middle feels like the raw thing; the first features his songs done by others, notably Miguelito Valdés, while most of the third is familiar fare from Dizzy Gillespie's big band, ending with a couple of posthumous tributes; marginal as entertainment, but redeemed with Jordi Pujol's detailed booklet -- history loves an outsized legend. [9]

Pérez Prado

Pérez Prado and His Orchestra: *Kuba-Mambo* (1947-49, Tumbao -91) The "King of the Mambo" on his way up, with blasts of horns punctuating the most extreme twists and turns of percussion so striking he wound up breaking through even in America; none of the singers rival Benny Moré, but the arrangements, juxtaposing low and high art with the bravura of tango, are all the more striking. [9]

Julian Priester

Julian Priester *Pepo Mtoto: Love, Love* (1974, ECM -05) A Chicago-born trombonist, Priester played on over 200 albums since 1954 until health problems recently slowed him down, but has few albums under his own name. He started with Sun Ra and Max Roach, backed Dinah Washington and Ray Charles, worked with Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane in the early '60s, did a short stretch with Duke Ellington at the end of the decade. He's played everything from his hometown blues to avant-garde, including a foray into fusion in the early-'70s with Herbie Hancock. The two LP-side medleys here fuse synths, guitar, bass and percussion into long riddim romps, with smears of trombone adding depth and personality. [9]

Julian Priester/Sam Rivers: *Hints on Light and Shadow* (1996, Postcards) The third name here is Tucker Martine, who did the electronics that percolate subtly in the background. Priester is a veteran trombonist who started in R&B bands and played with Sun Ra in the '50s. He doesn't have much under his own name. Rivers, of course, is a tenor saxophonist with a similar history -- a bit older, although he didn't manage to record until 1964. Parts of this work well -- Rivers in particular is cogent -- but sometimes the sparseness leaves you a bit short. [5]

Louis Prima

Louis Prima: *Say It With a Slap* (1947-49, Buddha -99) Transitional, it says in the booklet, which means one foot in New Orleans, the other groping for Las Vegas. Keely Smith shows up for the last song, replacing the equally fine Cathy Allen. His own vocals are as thin and pathetic as ever -- just how corny he can get is shown by his take on a rare standard, "All of Me." The big band is thick but swings easily, and Prima's trumpet is always a treat. [+]

Louis Prima & Keely Smith: *Live From Las Vegas* (1958, Capitol -05) Like Louis Armstrong, Louis Prima hailed from New Orleans, played hot trumpet, and sang superbly despite having a uniquely unmusical voice, but for most critics he was one of those second comings as farce. His early recordings go back to 1934, but he never amounted to much until he hit Las Vegas in the '50s with a hot Sam Butera band featuring his child bride Keely Smith. The buzz from Las Vegas got him a contract at Capitol, where from 1956-62 he recorded the songs he's remembered for: a mix of jump blues and pasta fazool with hot peppers and shameless clowning. This live show does a fair job of capturing Prima and Butera in action, but the reason to tune in is Smith, who knows that the real reason no appliance can replace her man is that none are so much fun to make the butt of her disdain. Also to count how many times she works "hot damn!" into her songs. [9]

Professor Longhair

Professor Longhair: *New Orleans Piano* (1949-53, Atlantic -89) Early, which means he has to work harder, which he does. [9]

Professor Longhair: *Mardi Gras in Baton Rouge* (1971-72, Rhino -91) Later, looser, lazier, longer. [9]

Red Prysock

Rock 'n Roll: The Best of Red Prysock (1954-57, AVI -96) Prysock was an r&b honker in the early '50s. In one piece here he's invited to blow over a shuffle beat, and complains that he can't play that slow. He stops the beat, then rips off what may be the best solo here. There's too much of the same thing here, but he can be a lot of fun when he's on, which is most of the time. [+]

Red Prysock: *Swingsation* (1951-61, Polygram -99) Much more of the same thing, although this one is a bit more varied: covers a longer stretch, and even throws in a ballad, on which he's not as inept as he thinks -- he gets a beautiful tone out of his tenor sax. He's certainly not important enough that you need both sets. This one is shorter, probably cheaper, probably easier to find, more diverse, more representative, and not quite as good, but none of those differences make all that much difference. [5]

Tito Puente

Tito Puente: *Dance Mania [Legacy Edition]* (1956-60, RCA/Legacy, 2CD -09) A Puerto Rican timbalero from Spanish Harlem, Puente jumped onto the Cuban bandwagon in the mid-1950s, releasing albums like *Cuban Carnival* and *Cubarama* before this breakthrough party album. The band is huge, the blaring brass rather clunky, and the beats a bit more basic than what the real Cubans were doing -- Pérez Prado, in particular, managed to sound more pop and at the same time more radical -- but the

energy is cranked up high and the vocals exude passion. This package expands the original 12-cut 37:50 album to 22 cuts to fill the first disc, then offers *Dance Mania Vol. 2*, again pumped up from 12 to 23 cuts. The prime slice is slightly leaner and cleaner, but it's hard to nitpick the rest: more is truly more. [9]

The Essential Tito Puente (1949-63, RCA/Legacy -2CD -05) A Puerto Rican from Spanish Harlem, Puente took over the drum kit in Machito's Afro-Cuban band when he was 19, and a decade later was running his own band, garnering plaudits like "the king of mambo," or just El Rey. He played anything you can hit with a stick or mallet, but was best known for timbales -- a kit with two tunable drums, cowbells and cymbals. He recorded more than one hundred albums, working steadily up to his death in 2000, but his classic recordings date from the '50s, when he as much as created the craze for mambo and cha-cha. His bands were huge, the brass driving home every point, the complex percussion flat out racing. My appetite for salsa, which roughly speaking is the next generation beyond Puente and Machito, has long been limited by its slick overkill, but for once the title here is right: this is essential. [9]

Tito Puente & His Orchestra: *Live at the 1977 Monterey Jazz Festival* (1977, MJF -08) A typical set by the great timbalero and his venerable orchestra, featuring signature tunes like "Oye Como Va" and "El Rey del Timbal," rhumbas and mambos, a dash of riskier Afro-Cuban jazz, and a cha cha take on Stevie Wonder. [+]

The Best of Tito Puente [20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection] (1991-99, Hip-O -05) Well down the road -- the first of the RMM albums sampled here was called *The Mambo King: His 100th Album*, and the last was cut a year before he died at age 77; the live "Oye Como Va" at the end has seen better days, but everything else is typically bright and sprightly. [6]

Don Pullen

Don Pullen: *Tomorrow's Parties* (1976-77, Koch) A funk/fusion album, not what I expected, even with a lineup which includes Randy Brecker. Pullen's electronic keyb work is not just funky, it's awesome. But after having established its groove, it throws you a straight change I could do without. [+]

Don Pullen: *Milano Strut* (1979, Black Saint) Not so much a duet as just two percussionists who can fill a room: Famoudou Don Moye on his usual array of devices, and Pullen pounding the piano or pushing the organ. [+]

Don Pullen: *Plays Monk* (1984, Why Not? -10) The last pianist to work for Charles Mingus is an odd choice to play Monk, and I suspect he gave little thought to the project; he keeps wanting to work in his trademark flourishes, dazzling of course, but excess baggage especially when playing songs that hide their odd note choices in a cloak of primitivism. [5]

Don Pullen: *Mosaic Select* (1986-90, Mosaic -3CD -04) Pullen had a gimmick: he would turn his hands over and smash out huge clusters of notes with his knuckles. It was the most astonishing sound ever to come out of a piano, and he could play in that mode long enough to take your breath away. But it was less a gimmick than the ultimate example of his unprecedentedly physical attack on the piano. He built up harmonies with explosions of dissonant color and rhythmic complexity, as fast as Art Tatum with his curlicues. But he died in 1995, at 51 neither a shooting star nor a living legend, and his records have vanished from print -- especially the eight he cut for Blue Note from 1986 until his death. This

limited edition brings the first four back, squeezed onto three CDs. The first two are quartet albums with r&b-flavored saxophonist George Adams. Both are rousing, especially the first. The next two were trios, where the focus is even more squarely on his piano. He did much more in a short career -- he was perhaps the most interesting organist to emerge since Larry Young, and his later *Ode to Life* is poignant and moving. But this was the pinnacle of his pianistic power. [10]

Ike Quebec

Ike Quebec: *It Might As Well Be Spring* (1961, Blue Note -06) Great name, but a spotty career, cutting r&b 78s for Blue Note and Savoy in the late '40s, then reappearing from 1958-62, specializing in soul jazz 45s, before dying of lung cancer in 1963, age 44. All along he may have been more notable as Blue Note's a&r guy, recruiting Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Dexter Gordon, and many more. He played on Monk's early "genius" recordings, sounding confused. But by 1960 he developed a rich, lustrous tone to his tenor sax, and his blues and ballads bring out the joyous warmth of the instrument. This quartet with Freddie Roach on organ and Milt Hinton on bass has two originals that go down easy, but it's the well-worn standards that shine. [9]

Ike Quebec: *Heavy Soul* (1961, Blue Note -05) A tenor saxophonist with a heavy tone, lumbering through vibratoed ballads, but capable of a soaring honk when the pace picks up, which happens when organist Freddie Roach gets up a full head of steam; soul, heavy because that is his right. [+]

Ike Quebec: *Bossa Nova Soul Samba* (1962, Blue Note -07) Or something sorta like that, although Soul is the only part of that title Quebec's all that conversant with; the rhythm team leans Hispanic rather than Brazilian, and may have meant the lazy riddims as satire, but the tenor saxophonist took them as an excuse for a shmoozy ballads album, which is his fort . [7]

Ike Quebec: *The Complete Blue Note 45 Sessions* (1959-62, Blue Note -2CD -05) A mainstream tenor saxophonist with a large tone and graceful swing, Quebec recorded a bit in the '40s -- his work on Thelonious Monk's early records was almost comically inept, but he had a jukebox hit in "Blue Harlem." After a hiatus -- drugs, the common cold of the bebop era -- he hooked up again with Blue Note in the late '50s, recording a series of blues and ballads albums that framed him well before he died at age 44 in 1963 -- *Blue and Sentimental* is a good example. Aside from the albums, Quebec cut singles aimed at recapitulating his early jukebox success. The 26 cuts here are all small groups with organ, sometimes guitar and/or bass, and drums. The sidemen are little known and mostly inconspicuous, and he sticks closely to what he does best: blues, simple romps, beautifully articulated ballads. [9]

Alvin Queen

Alvin Queen: *Jammin' Uptown* (1985, Just a Memory -08) A front line including Terence Blanchard blows hot and heavy, but all the interesting spots here come from the back benchers in the rare moments when they can break in -- pianist John Hicks, trombonist Robin Eubanks, and the leader, a drummer more subtle than his hard bop rep suggests. [5]

Abbey Rader

Rader Schwarz Group: *The Spirit Inside Us* (1998, Timbre) Abbey Rader is a drummer who

developed in the SoHo lofts before heading to Europe, where he hitched a ride in Gunter Hampel's big band. Gunter Schwarz is a tenor saxophonist with no other credits that I'm aware of, but he matches up well with Rader. Zam Johnson contributes some electronic squelch to go with Ed Schuller's bass and Bang's violin. It all makes for a nicely balanced, somewhat understated set of free jazz. [+]

Abbey Rader/Billy Bang: *Echoes* (1999, Abray) Rader gets top billing because this came out on his label. Bang wrote all but one of the songs, and leads throughout -- even recites his poem for Dennis Charles. Still, the drums help to pace and steady the violinist, and they add the echoes of the title. [+]

Phil Ranelin

Phil Ranelin: *The Time Is Now!* (1973-74, Hefty -01) The avant-garde didn't actually disappear in the early '70s, although it effectively went underground. Aylmer, Coltrane and Dolphy died. Coleman got into a snit with his record companies and kept to himself. Taylor tried his hand at teaching. Russell went into exile. Labels like Blue Note and Impulse basically imploded. Later on new labels like Soul Note/Black Saint, Enja, and DIW picked up the slack, but those were almost all based in Europe and Japan; expensive, with little distribution here. Homegrown labels were even more obscure, like Detroit's Tribe Records. Ranelin recorded two early '70s albums for Tribe, so obscure that when I received a new record by "the legendary Phil Ranelin" I had never heard of him. Turns out that the two were reissued by another tiny label in 2001. This is the first one, and it feels like the missing link between the '60s avants and the loft scene that emerged in the late '70s: they are very much products of the time, but so unheard that we never had a true picture of that time. Ranelin plays trombone, prominent here, but the front line is shared with other horns -- Wendell Harrison (tenor sax), Marcus Belgrave (flugelhorn), Charles Moore (trumpet), Haroun El Nil (alto sax) -- plus piano, bass drums, and extra percussion -- everyone is credited with some of that. The rhythm is usually built around simple repetitive figures, mostly from bass or piano with the drums swinging free. The horns weave in and out, making up occasional layers when they meet. The effect is deep, serious, complex. [9]

Phil Ranelin: *Vibes From the Tribe* (1976, Hefty -01) Two great groove pieces to start, and an 18-minute avant powerhouse to close, but they bracket two pieces where Ranelin sings -- one a marriage proposal, the other a paean to future children. I suppose we can cut him slack for sentiment, but his singing is pretty awful, and the music deforms to accommodate him. CD adds bonus takes of the first two groove pieces. [+]

Jimmy Raney

Jimmy Raney: *A* (1954-55, OJC -91) Three sessions: one in 1954 with piano-bass-drums, two in 1955 with trumpet (John Wilson) added. Pianist Hall Overton shows up on some early Stan Getz and Teddy Charles records, and arranged Monk's big band concerts. Bassist Teddy Kotick worked with Charlie Parker, as well as Getz and Charles and various others. Art Mardigan plays drums on the first session; Nick Stabulas on the last two. Mardigan has connections to Getz, Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray. Stabulas strikes me as a more familiar name, probably because he played with Konitz on *Motion*. Raney played with Getz early on too, so that's the obvious connection between the band, and why this feels west coast cool even though it was recorded in NJ. As a guitarist, I'd be hard pressed to tell you what separates Raney from Tal Farlow or Mundell Lowe. (For one thing, he followed Farlow in the Red Norvo Trio.) Raney's an interesting guitarist, and his work with Overton here more than bears that

out. Wilson, on the other hand, kind of gets in the way: he's good here, but not great, and the instrument's prominence takes a bit away from our ability to hear Raney. Nothing terribly wrong with that, but it makes me suspect that the place to hear Raney is somewhere else. [+]

Enrico Rava

Lou Rawls

Lou Rawls: *The Very Best* (1966-92, Blue Note -05) A mild-mannered soul singer, whose 21 Capitol albums from the his '60s prime yield two cuts, the rest coming from three 1989-92 Blue Notes, the last steady work of his career. Sidemen include jazz notables, but only Steve Khan and Hank Crawford sent me to the credits. Rawls can impress as a singer, but the best songs remind me that someone else has done them better. [4]

Red Rodney

Red Rodney/Herman Schoonderwalt Quintet: *Scrapple From the Apple* (1975, Blue Jack Jazz -05) A live radio shot from 1975, with Charlie Parker's trumpeter "Albino Red" joining a Dutch quartet led by reedist Schoonderwalt. The program leans on Parker's songbook, with long pieces and generous solos. Aside from Red, pianist Nico Bunink is most impressive. Terrific lead-off "On Green Dolphin Street," but very solid throughout. [8]

Freddie Redd

Freddie Redd Quartet With Jackie McLean: *Music From "The Connection"* (1960, Blue Note -05) One of the great jazz soundtrack albums; Redd was a fine bebop pianist in rare form, but McLean is the star, and this is a key item in his discography. [9]

Dewey Redman

Dewey Redman Quartet: *The Struggle Continues* (1982, ECM -07) With Ed Blackwell on drums, Joshua's esteemed father can work Ornette Coleman territory at will; with Charles Eubanks on piano, he can take a break, and occasionally wax lyrical on his tenor sax; with Mark Helias on bass neither impulse strays far from the edge. [6]

Dewey Redman: *In London* (1996, Palmetto -97) With Cameron Brown (bass), Rita Marcotulli (piano), and Matt Wilson (drums). I remember reading a blindfold test where Joshua Redman was played a piece by Dewey Redman (possibly from this album), and immediately responded, "doesn't Dad sound great?" Sure does. In particular, he's got a Shepp-ish low register that Joshua lost long ago. [+]

Dizzy Reece

Dizzy Reece: *Comin' On!* (1960, Blue Note) Very nice hard bop date, with Stanley Turrentine in exceptionally lithe form. The drum solo on "Achmet" sounds uncommonly good, which has been

known to happen when the drummer's Art Blakey. [9]

Hans Reichel

Hans Reichel/Achim Knipsel: *Erdmännchen* (1977, FMP) Two meerkats on the cover, translating the title; two electric guitarists, playing without pedals or effects or overdubs or whatever, a point made because they're making sounds you don't expect, their interaction a see-saw rhythm the individual sounds bounce off from. [9]

Steve Reid

Steve Reid: *Rhythmatism* (1976, Universal Sound -04) A drummer who picked up his beat in the studio working for James Brown and Fela Kuti, Reid remains irresistibly snappy even in a free jazz context, but the main reason for noting this reissue of a long-lost album is the alto saxist, a wild and wooly Arthur Blythe in peak form before his major label debut. [9]

Django Reinhardt

Django Reinhardt/Stéphane Grappelli: *Swing From Paris* (1935-39, ASV) As good a single CD sampler as I know of the seminal Quintet du Hot Club de France. [10]

Django Reinhardt: *Djangology* (1949, Bluebird -02) A reissue of Reinhardt recordings cut in Rome in 1949 with Stephane Grappelli, Gianni Safred (piano), Carlo Pecori (bass), and Aurelio De Carolis (drums), in the resuscitated Bluebird's new style, which means that it's been stuffed up to the 75 minute mark. The booklet talks about how a "wise" RCA exec discovered these tapes well after the fact and bought the masters. How long I don't know, but they've been re-released several times in the past, including the single CD *Djangology 1949* and the double CD *The Indispensable Django Reinhardt*. While there's some nice stuff here, I've yet to find anything Reinhardt did postwar that has the bounce of his prewar work. Reinhardt died in 1953, just 43 years old. Grappelli was two years older, and survived Reinhardt by 44 years, so in a sense his career was just coming into his own. [+]

Django Reinhardt: *Bruxelles 1947/Paris 1951 1952 1953* (1947-53, Musidisc) A rather inconsistent set of late sessions, most of which venture into be-bop territory, with the customary sonic degradation. Not uninteresting, but not top of the game either. [5]

Emily Remler

Emily Remler: *Retrospective, Vol. 1: Standards* (1981-88, Concord -91) Died young (32, heart attack, evidently heroin isn't good for that), shortly before Concord distilled her five albums into two compilations. She was into Wes Montgomery, although she also duetted with Larry Coryell. Like many comps, this sounds inconsistent; like most lite guitar, a horn runs roughshod over her. Like most breakdowns between standards and originals, the standards are easier to analyze and offer her more range. The jaunty "Daahoud" (cut with Hank Jones and first-rate bass/drums) is a strong start. Her unaccompanied take on "Afro Blue" is probably the best thing here. [+]

Howard Riley

Howard Riley Trio: *Angle* (1968-69, Columbia [UK]) Piano trio, with Barry Guy (bass) and Alan Jackson (drums). Barbra Thompson also appears on flute. This seems to have been an especially fertile period in British jazz, and it is interesting that such avant records were released by a major label. Riley's follow-up, *The Day Will Come*, is a landmark. This falls slightly short, but not for Barry Guy's effort -- he dominated the album, producing a huge range of noise. [9]

Howard Riley: *The Day Will Come* (1970, Columbia) A crowned album in the *Penguin Guide*, recently resurfaced UK only. Riley has a long, distinguished career as an avant-garde pianist, but this is his only title that I've managed to track down. Impressive. [9]

Sam Rivers

Sam Rivers: *Fuchsia Swing Song* (1964, Blue Note -03) Rivers, already past 40, got his first real break when a teenaged admirer of his (drummer Tony Williams) talked his boss (Miles Davis) into hiring Rivers as a last-minute substitute for George Coleman on Davis' 1964 tour of Japan. The tenure was brief -- Wayne Shorter got the Davis Quintet job, and you know the rest of that story. But the brief association gave Blue Note an angle to sell Rivers' first album, as did the presence of Williams and Ron Carter. Rivers has spent all of what is now a very long career on the tattered edge of the avant-garde, so the surprising thing about this album is that it's not difficult at all. Which isn't to say that it's in anyone's mainstream. Williams and Carter produce a crackling rhythm, and Jaki Byard's piano solos are razor sharp. But Rivers himself is a revelation: his playing seems like a synthesis of all of the '60s free jazz styles, including ones at the time unheard, but still tethered to a rhythmic framework that he must have learned in his earliest days of r&b honking. That this is a quartet (and such a superb one) serves him especially well. One of the great albums of the era, as fresh today as then. [10]

Sam Rivers: *Contours* (1965, Blue Note -04) Two lineup changes from Rivers' debut, *Fuchsia Swing Song*, and both hurt: Joe Chambers replaces Tony Williams on drums, and Freddie Hubbard crowds Rivers up front; the result is accessible hard bop instead of robust, prodding avant-garde, although sometimes Rivers breaks through; then again sometimes Rivers plays flute. [+]

Sam Rivers: *Portrait* (1995, FMP -97): A solo showcase: first surprise is that he starts off on piano and makes a credible showing; moves on to tenor sax (mostly), soprano sax, flute, and finally back to piano; it's tough to make solo anything work, much less tenor sax, but he's steady and ingenious throughout. [6]

Sam Rivers: *Inspiration* (1999, RCA) I've never liked Rivers' avant-noise, so the thought of turning him loose with a big band didn't appeal to me. But this shows some composition cleverness and has brief snatches of stellar performance, and its excesses have more to do with big band overkill than with Rivers' well-aged avant-noise. [+]

Max Roach

Max Roach Plus Four: *Quiet as It's Kept* (1960, Verve -09) A pianoless group fronted by the two Turrentine brothers (Tommy on trumpet, Stanley on tenor sax), with Julian Priester on trombone and Bob Boswell on bass; the drummer's too tricky to file this away as hard bop, which leaves the horns a

little uncertain. [5]

Howard Roberts

Guitarist, born in Phoenix, played in West Coast groups eventually winding up in Seattle.

Howard Roberts: *Antelope Freeway* (1971, Impulse) Snatches of radio noise and talk put this on the highway, while the metallic guitar suggests steel-belted radials, tenaciously grabbing the road through whatever keyb sleet and slick comes their way. [6]

Howard Roberts: *Equinox Express Elevator* (1972, Impulse) Haven't been able to track down credits, but the guitar is more like Roberts' old pal Barney Kessel than McLaughlin or Hendrix, and it weaves its way over electric keys that are pleasant and sometimes surprise you. [6]

Perry Robinson

Perry Robinson Quartet: *Angelology* (1996, Timescraper Jazz -98) Probable title on front cover, but not on spine, back cover, etc., all of which just say Perry Robinson Quartet. Robinson is credited with (soprano/sopranino clarinet); also in group: Simon Nabatov (piano/accordion), Ed Schuller (bass), Ernst Bier (drums). Despite a couple bits that strike me as avant-classical abstraction, this is marvelous music. The detour into tango with Nabatov picking up the accordion is a wonderful surprise, but just one of many. [9]

Spike Robinson

Spike Robinson: *Very Live in Boulder, Colorado* (1974, Hep -12) Early archival tape from the late tenor saxophonist (1930-2001), a mainstream player with a light "Four Brothers" tone, flitting through standards including "Scrapple From the Apple"; only familiar name in the quartet is guitarist Dale Bruning, b. 1934, who's had a similar career of looking back while inching forward, and is often notably eloquent here. [6]

Spike Robinson: *Reminiscin* (1991, Capri -92) With Mundell Lowe (guitar), Monty Budwig (bass), and Jake Hanna (drums). Robinson would have been a "young fogie" had he been younger when he started recording (in 1984, at age 54). As it is, he plays a lot like Scott Hamilton, rather than the other way around. Budwig, who died in 1992, shortly after this session, gets the dedication. Nothing very substantial here, but Lowe's guitar swings nicely, and Robinson's sax play is lovely. [+]

Betty Roché

Betty Roché: *Take the "A" Train* (1956, Bethlehem -94) She is best known for having sung with Duke Ellington, and the title cut was her showpiece there -- although the words have always seemed like a quaint and rather forced afterthought to Billy Strayhorn's amazing melody. She is fond of scat, and has a bebop feel -- "I Just Got a Message, Baby" sounds like exceptionally inspired vocalese, and is probably the best thing here. Her singing has a slightly odd feel to it, like she's overly careful to make sure she enunciates clearly. The band includes fine performances by Conte Candoli on trumpet and Eddie Costa on vibes -- indeed, this is quite a showcase for Costa. [+]

Sonny Rollins

The most imposing tenor saxophonist to emerge in the 1950s -- *Saxophone Colossus* was an album title that turned into his business card.

The Best of Sonny Rollins (1951-56, Prestige -04) A sequence of records that culminates in the aptly named *Saxophone Colossus* and his signature calypso "St. Thomas," this is young Rollins full of fire but adaptable and still willing to please others. Still, an odd and somewhat unsatisfying selection, with early MJQ and an Earl Coleman vocal that gives Rollins little to do but schmooze, but nothing from *Plays for Bird*; Prestige's 7-CD box is a reasonable alternative, not an extravagance. [9]

Sonny Rollins: *The Vest Best* (1956-57, Blue Note -05) Two sessions with Rollins struggling to overcome a second horn (Donald Byrd and J.J. Johnson), one with just piano (Wynton Kelly) interfering, and one cut from his legendary trio performance at the Village Vanguard. A thin slice early in his career, as he broke out of small group bop to emerge, as his most famous album put it, as saxophone colossus. [+]

Sonny Rollins: *Freedom Suite* (1958, Riverside/Keepnews Collection -08) The 19:37 title cut seems a little subdued, tentative as if freedom is still uncertain; same for the side of standards, expanded with redundant bonus cuts, but they're just tapping into his sentimental side. [8]

Sonny Rollins: *What's New?* (1962, RCA) Second album, after *The Bridge*, after the tenor sax great's 3-year hiatus, two tracks with Candido for extra percussion, three with guitarist Jim Hall (eventually reissued on CD as *The Quartets*); not sure who sings on the closing calypso, "Brown Skin Girl," but when the sax takes over there can be no doubt. [9]

Sonny Rollins: *Our Man in Jazz* (1962, RCA) Original album had three tracks, with "Dearly Beloved" bracketed by a 25:26 "Oleo" and a 15:17 "Doxy" -- basically a blowing session, with Don Cherry's cornet squaring off a quartet with Bob Cranshaw and Billy Higgins; the cornet adds a little dissonance to the sax, but mostly gives way to Rollins' titanic improvisations. [9]

Sonny Rollins: *Sonny Meets Hawk!* (1963, RCA Victor -02) One of two tenor sax matches in Rollins' long discography, and a more interesting one than his bout with John Coltrane on *Tenor Madness*. Rollins is out to impress Coleman Hawkins, often by playing around him, although Hawkins is focused in the game, even when the rhythm floats free. Last three cuts add Don Cherry and move even further out. [9]

Sonny Rollins: *Now's the Time* (1964, RCA) A set of familiar bebop standards from Parker, Gillespie, Golson, Monk (twice), Lewis, Davis, and Rollins (3:53 of "St. Thomas"), with Herbie Hancock on three tracks, Thad Jones on one, otherwise just bass and drums. [8]

Sonny Rollins: *The Standard Sonny Rollins* (1964, RCA) Ten standards, things like "Night and Day" and "Trav'lin' Light" and "Long Ago (and Far Away)," backed by various bassists and drummers, often with Jim Hall on guitar or Herbie Hancock on piano, played with consummate authority but Rollins never breaks loose to astonish you, which by now is the least we expect. [7]

The Essential Sonny Rollins: The RCA Years (1962-64, RCA/Legacy -2CD -05) Rollins established his reputation in the late '50s, then stopped recording in 1959. He finally returned to the studio three years later with an album called *The Bridge*, and followed that up with six more LPs in rapid succession. Rollins left RCA for Impulse, where he recorded three more albums up to 1966, then he

took another leave, not recording until 1972 when he signed with Milestone. Rollins' RCA recordings have never been accorded much fame, although they've been kept more or less consistently in print, and wrapped up in a 6-CD box with the usual outtakes. The meetings with Don Cherry and Coleman Hawkins reinforced Rollins' status as a loner, but his quartets with Jim Hall showcased some fascinating guitar. Lurking in the background is the haunting question of what Rollins should do viz. the avant-garde -- this was, after all, the period when John Coltrane emerged as his great rival. But there is no answer to that question -- despite the later interest of folks like Ken Vandermark in Rollins' '60s recordings, the great man's own belated answer was to return to form. This is a useful sampler of his RCA work, but what makes it so compelling isn't how well it represents the period -- it's that it consistently finds Rollins' great voice in a rather mixed bag, and as such redeems a body of work we've always been uncertain about. [10]

Sonny Rollins: *On Impulse!* (1965, Impulse) His first album on the label is his most typical, a quartet with Ray Bryant on piano, turning five standards into springboards for stellar tenor sax solos. [10]

Sonny Rollins: *There Will Never Be Another You* (1965, Impulse) A warm-up session, I suppose, recorded a month earlier with two dupes and left in the can until 1978, some cuts fade out a bit, but Tommy Flanagan's piano stands out, and Rollins can't be denied. [9]

Sonny Rollins: *Silver City* (1972-95, Milestone 2CD -96) A robust sample of 25 years on Milestone, ordered up with a keen ear by Gary Giddins -- nothing like a great critic for a task like this; two hours-plus of constant, jaw-dropping astonishment. [10]

Sonny Rollins + 3 (1996, Milestone) Actually, two separate quartets, both with old standby Bob Cranshaw on bass, who is joined by: Stephen Scott (piano) and Jack DeJohnette (drums) on two cuts; Tommy Flanagan (piano) and Al Foster (drums) on the other five. Rollins rarely has the patience for pianists, but when he does it's often Flanagan -- who was also at his side in 1956 for *Saxophone Colossus*. This is terrifically robust saxophone, with a take on "Mona Lisa" that will be considered definitive. [9]

Wallace Roney

Wallace Roney: *Seth Air* (1991, Muse) Nothing exceptionally special here, but Roney's tone is so bright he's undeniable, and the group, including brother Antoine, pianist Jacky Terrasson, and the omnipresent Peter Washington are richly supportive. [+]

Wally Rose

Wally Rose: *Whippin' the Keys* (1968-71, Delmark -08) A pianist in San Francisco dixieland bands led by Lu Watters, Bob Scobey, and Turk Murphy, Rose cut a couple of solo records of ragtime classics in the 1950s, and dug further into the genre in two later albums reissued here -- 16 of 21 songs have "rag" in the title somewhere, with "Pickles & Peppers" a typical exception. [6]

Michele Rosewoman

Michele Rosewoman Quartet: *The Source* (1983, Soul Note -84) Quartet with Baikida Carroll (trumpet, flugelhorn), Roberto Miranda (bass), Pheeroan AkLaff (drums), from early in the pianist's

career. [+]

Renee Rosnes

Renee Rosnes: *As We Are Now* (1997, Blue Note) First rate quartet, with Chris Potter (tenor/soprano sax), Christian McBride (bass), Jack DeJohnette (drums). My only caveat is Potter, who has a slick, plasticky tone that I've never much cared for, although he can knock off some impressive runs. The other three are near perfect, and Rosnes in particular has a touch that seems just right. The title cut, where Potter lays out, is sublime -- as Rosnes recedes into delicacy, McBride and DeJohnette provide just the right amount of complement. [9]

Renee Rosnes: *With a Little Help From My Friends* (1988-99, Blue Note -01) A retrospective, with four previously unreleased tracks, mostly alternates or live versions. The title comes from the Lennon-McCartney song, a tough nut to jazz, and the long list of friends on the cover are sparsely represented in a series of mostly small groups. Especially impressive are the sax players: Joe Henderson, Walt Weiskopf, Branford Marsalis, Wayne Shorter, Chris Potter. Moreover, she does a fine job of holding them together. Enough of these pieces stand out to make this worthwhile. [+]

Ned Rothenberg

Ned Rothenberg Double Band: *Real and Imagined Time* (1993, Moers) Sextet organized as two trios, each bass-drums-sax (or sometimes flute). The horns belong to Rothenberg and Thomas Chapin, a remarkable player in his own right. The basses (Jerome Harris, Chris Wood) are electric, with Harris switching off to guitar. And two drummers (Jim Black, Billy Martin). The electric basses make the difference here, giving this a muscular rhythmic pulse that sometimes comes close to funk, freeing the drums and horns to play with their own fantasies. What fun! [9]

Ned Rothenberg: *Power Lines* (1995, New World) Avant garde saxophone in a large band context, this has a lot of interesting, stimulating music. [+]

Charlie Rouse

Charlie Rouse/Julius Watkins: *Les Jazz Modes: The Rare Dawn Sessions* (1956, Biograph -2CD -95) Pidgin French from the '50s, the group so-named because Watkins' instrument was the French horn, a rarity in the jazz world. Also unusual here is that this represents Rouse before he started working with Thelonious Monk. Monk was not merely a difficult leader -- he became an all-consuming occupation. Rouse's work here is characteristically delightful -- perhaps even a shade lighter than his work with Monk. Watkins' horn doesn't have nearly the expressive range or personality, but his lines have a spare elegance. Main caveat is the occasional appearance of a warbling soprano singer who adds nothing but scat. [5]

Charlie Rouse: *Bossa Nova Bacchanal* (1962-65, Blue Note -03) The album proper is from 1962, with Kenny Burrell and Chauncey Westbrook on guitar, Larry Gales on bass, Willie Bobo on drums, Patato Valdes on conga, and Garvin Masseaux on chekere. Bossa nova albums were dime-a-dozen in the early '60s -- Stan Getz was just the most successful. On the first five cuts Rouse has an unusually robust sound; on the sixth, "Meci Bon Dieu," his sound changes to something more typical for him, a slightly open, underblown, airy style. The rhythm also shifts -- the song comes from Haiti, and has a

more primitive feel. "In Martinique" sort of splits the difference. [+]

Keith Rowe

Keith Rowe & Jeffrey Morgan: *Dial: Log-Rhythm* (1997, Matchless -99) Rowe is a guitarist closely associated with the experimental AMM group -- a group much esteemed by the *Penguin Guide* authors, and surprisingly well represented at my local public library. Still, I can't say as I've ever gotten much out of them. Morgan plays alto sax, which timbre-wise seems to be a pretty close match for what Rowe does with electric guitar -- i.e., torture it. Tortured saxophone, of course, is a well established field. I can't distinguish between the sounds of the instruments all that clearly: the honks are certainly sax, but a high-pitched warble could be either, and what I suspect is going on here is that Rowe is extracting sounds from his guitar that are intended to match the tortured sax idiom. So that's the set-up. What's the payoff? Well, the sounds aren't really all that interesting -- this is more muted than, say, Brotzmann/Bailey, but torture's still torture. [4]

Gonzalo Rubalcaba

Gonzalo Rubalcaba: *Inner Voyage* (1998, Blue Note -99) The trio sounds introspective. Special guest Michael Brecker sounds like Michael Brecker, which is OK for what it is but doesn't tip the balance much. One song that does is the Monk piece, done with just the trio, and they get to stretch out and have some fun with it. [5]

Roswell Rudd

Roswell Rudd: *Roswell Rudd* (1965, Free America/Verve -05) The great trombonist trades lines with alto saxist John Tchicai creating a bouncy polyphony that never quite slips into a groove; a radio shot tape, sound quality so-so. [+]

Hilton Ruiz

Hilton Ruiz: *Heroes* (1993, Telarc) Big band cubano thing, big names too, tributes ranging from Billie Holiday to Sonny Rollins, an exercise in de trop that is ultimately hard to follow, although it's not without its moments. Steve Turre's trombone is one of them. [5]

Jimmy Rushing

Jimmy Rushing: *Cat Meets Chick/The Jazz Odyssey of James Rushing Esq.* (1955-56, Collectables -02) Rushing was the prototype for the Kansas City blues shouter, but he never meant to be anything but a jazz singer. This may have been because he never had to shout to make a point: his timing and delivery were so natural, his swing so effortless, that his staple blues just defy gravity. This resurrects two '50s albums that he cut with his fellow Basie alumnus Buck Clayton, and Clayton provides joyous lift throughout. The first set has Rushing trading songs with the competent Ada Moore, but if the idea there was to use her as a foil like Velma Middleton was for Louis Armstrong, they never go anywhere with it. But Clayton and Rushing sound terrific, and the second set is a tour de force. [10]

Jimmy Rushing: *Five Feet of Soul* (1963, Collectables -98) The 1963 date is for the Colpix album

reissued here; don't know when the four bonus cuts came out -- they are attributed to Gotham Recordings. The Colpix cuts are the usual big band affairs, with Rushing sounding just magnificent, especially on songs like "Just Because" and "Heartaches." The band gets better on "Trouble in Mind" -- blues wails on trumpet, little fills on sax, that sort of thing. Terrific version of "Did You Ever," which he wrote and has done many times. [9]

Jimmy Rushing: *The Scene: Live in New York* (1965, High Note -09) Nothing new or surprising for anyone who knows the great blues shouter's standard set, which doesn't make it one whit less delightful; cut with a couple of instrumentals from his opening act/backing band, featuring Zoot Sims and Al Cohn. [9]

George Russell

George Russell Sextet: *At the Five Spot* (1960, Verve -00) David Young (alto sax), Alan Kiger (trumpet), David Baker (trombone), Russell (piano), Chuck Israels (bass), Joe Hunt (drums). This is well thought out, densely overlaid music, which showcases Russell at his most systematic. [9]

George Russell Sextet: *In K.C.* (1961, Decca) Russell's first great album was called *Jazz Workshop* (1956), and he continued to cultivate unknowns in his personal vision of postbop; this is a live workshop, with Don Ellis (trumpet), Dave Baker (trombone), Dave Young (tenor sax), Chuck Israels (bass), Joe Hunt (drums), with just one piece by Russell, two by Baker, one by another Russell student (Carla Bley), and two by famous trumpet players. [7]

George Russell Septet: *The Stratus Seekers* (1962, Riverside/OJC -89) Don Ellis plays trumpet here, and his mad rush for the high notes recalls Russell's early association with Gillespie and the ferocity of vintage bebop, while saxophonist Paul Plummer gets the unenviable task of following Coltrane's explorations of modal improvisation (another Russell innovation). [9]

George Russell: *The Outer View* (1962, Riverside/OJC -91) Sextet, the three horns don't break out of the tricky compositions as on the previous album, but the postbop ambitions are similar; two more Russell discoveries: composer Carla Bley, who had debuted on his 1960 *Stratusphunk*, and Sheila Jordan, who sings a very striking "You Are My Sunshine." [8]

George Russell: *The Essence of George Russell* (1966-67, Soul Note -83) First hour-long take of "Electronic Sonata for Souls Loved by Nature" -- a later, shorter version was released under that name by Flying Dutchman -- caught live with a crackling Scandinavian big band, not much electronics but a marvelous piece of scoring, finished off with a 15-minute "Now and Then" -- a smaller band determined to sound larger. [9]

George Russell: *Othello Ballet Suite/Electronic Organ Sonata No. 1* (1967-68, Soul Note -81) These two pieces were preliminary exercises in future "third stream" -- where academics like Gunther Schuller looked to merge jazz and classical, Russell plotted to make jazz the foundation for future classical music. In Scandinavia, he employs the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, trumpeter Rolf Eriksson, the two great Swedish saxophonists of the time (Arne Domnerus and Bernt Rosengren), and young Norwegian protégés Jan Garbarek and Jon Christensen. The "Suite" is dense, a feast for the horns. The second side is a pioneering exercise in electronics playing off Russell's organ -- possibly an attempt to counter Riley and Reich with something more rooted in jazz. [9]

George Russell Sextet: *Trip to Prillarguri* (1970, Soul Note -82) One of the major figures in jazz

history, pianist Russell spent the late 1960s in self-imposed exile in Norway, and this is the finest fruit of his labors: a group with four young musicians fast on their way to becoming major figures: Jan Garbarek (tenor sax), Terje Rypdal (guitar), Arild Andersen (bass), and Jon Christensen (drums) -- Stanton Davis, Jr. (trumpet) is the only one who went nowhere. Rypdal is terrific, but Garbarek is titanic here, playing with a raw force and edginess that ECM never allowed, especially on the 11-minute Ornette Coleman finale. [10]

George Russell: *Listen to the Silence* (1971, Soul Note -83) Commissioned by the Norwegian Cultural Fund, performed in Kongsberg Church, the big band is short on horns -- just Stanton Davis on trumpet and Jan Garbarek on tenor sax -- but has organ and electric piano/guitar/bass, and lots of vocals, some choirlike but most spoken against the grain; I don't care for the vocals, but the passages without them are striking. [5]

George Russell: *Vertical Form VI* (1977, Soul Note -81) Commissioned by Swedish Radio, another big band piece where the big band is augmented by electric keybs and bass for a consistent, almost funky pulse, and the horns generally hold back -- at least avoid the rowdiness Russell picked up from Gillespie, not that they can't swell and flutter. [7]

George Russell: *New York Big Band* (1977-78, Soul Note -82) Actually, one track -- Russell's Gillespie classic, "Cubana Be, Cubana Bop" -- was cut in Sweden with a mostly Swedish ensemble, but the 1978 tracks let the New Yorkers -- prominent names include Lew Soloff, Marty Ehrlich, Ricky Ford, Cameron Brown, and Warren Smith -- strut their stuff; Lee Genesis belts out "Big City Blues" and "God Bless the Child." [8]

George Russell's New York Band: *Live in an American Time Spiral* (1982, Soul Note -83) Another big one, with a pretty crack big band, including Tom Harrell, Ray Anderson, Marty Ehrlich, Jerome Harris, Ron McClure, Victor Lewis, many more. Three pieces: a 22-minute "Time Spiral" would have been on side one, the 16:30 "Ezz-thetic" and 10:17 "D.C. Divertimento" on the other side. Don't have it sorted out well, but it's certainly impressive in spots. [+]

Hal Russell

Hal Russell's *Chemical Feast: Elixir* (1979, Atavistic -01) Russell was the odd man out of Chicago's avant-garde. He was already 53 when this live tape was recorded, and this is evidently the earlier item in his discography. He started recording albums as the NRG Ensemble in 1981. After his death in 1992 the group carried on for a couple of albums, replacing Russell with Ken Vandermark. Russell's sidekick during this period was Mars Williams, who's dabbled in rock groups (Psychedelic Furs) and acid jazz (Liquid Soul) as well as more avant concerns (NRG, the Vandermark Five, Peter Brötzmann's Chicago Tentet). Two things worth noting here: one is the sound is crystal clear and right in your face; the other is the extreme nastiness of the sax right from the start (not knowing anything else about Spider Middleman, I'm guessing Williams is responsible). The first piece is by far the best, based on a classic Ornette Coleman tune, which they actually reprise recognizably in the last minute. Russell mostly drums, and George Southgate plays some very striking vibes. The saxes (including Russell on one cut) are loud and nasty, and the NRG is surging throughout. [+]

Luis Russell

The Luis Russell Story 1929-1934 (1929-34, Retrieval -2CD) Both discs are jiggered to end with "On Revival Day." Not sure how this intersects with Red Allen's comps, but either way this was a major group. [9]

Pee Wee Russell

Pee Wee Russell: *Ask Me Now!* (1965, Impulse -03) A quartet with Marshall Brown on valve trombone and bass trumpet, plus bass (Russell George) and drums (Ronnie Bedford). The contrast between Russell's clarinet and Brown's low brass is what makes this album special. Time and again it sets Russell up to show off his pied piperact, a delightful dance of notes that antedates swing yet remains timeless. [9]

Paul Rutherford

Paul Rutherford: *The Gentle Harm of the Bourgeoisie* (1974, Emanem) I can't unreservedly recommend an album of solo trombone, but I find this one fascinating. He works mostly in short discrete notes, often played fast, but without the sort of smears that often come with the instrument. The tone is ruddy, as opposed to something that might be mistaken for J.J. Johnson, so much of this has a staccato ring to it, or do I mean static? Fascinating, nonetheless. [+]

Michael Sahl

Michael Sahl & Eric Salzman: *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1978, Labor -12) Sahl is a postclassical composer, a year older than Salzman, his collaborator on several music theatre pieces, this one billed a comedy though more often tagged as their opera; rocks more than most avant-classicists, but like most modern opera tries to stuff too many words into too little music. [5]

Eric Salzman

Eric Salzman: *The Nude Paper Sermon/Wiretap* (1966-72, Labor -2CD -12) Composer, b. 1933; worked as a music critic for *New York Times*, *Stereo Review*, and others; produced an important series of post-classical records for Nonesuch. This reissues two of his early records. He describes his *The Nude Paper Sermon* (1969, Nonesuch) as "tropes for actor, renaissance consort, chorus, and electronics" -- mostly vocals, the voices trained but not hammy enough for opera, abstract and unsettled. The four pieces on *Wiretap* (1974, Finnadar) delve further into electronics -- Ilham Mimaroglu was the producer -- and found sounds, even more abstract and unsettled, and all the more invigorating for that. [6]

Joe Sample

Joe Sample/David T. Walker: *Swing Street Café* (1978, Verve -08) A keyboardist who is perfectly happy recycling Ray Charles, Chuck Willis, and Bill Doggett, teams up with a funk guitarist who rarely gets his name on the cover, but is equally happy just to be here. [6]

Pharoah Sanders

Given name Ferrell, tenor saxophonist, joined John Coltrane's on *Ascension* and broadened his vision, looking to Africa and far beyond.

Pharoah Sanders: *Pharoah's First* (1964, ESP-Disk -05) Two long pieces, the first a bit rougher, both close in tone and dynamics to Coltrane and very much up to the moment; the quintet isn't especially distinguished, although Jane "no relation" Getz holds her own on piano. [8]

Pharoah Sanders: *Tauhid* (1966, Impulse) Very much under John Coltrane's spell this early on -- Albert Ayler liked to refer to Coltrane and Sanders as "the father" and "the son," mostly because he saw himself as "the holy ghost" -- struggling on two long pieces (and one short one) spanning the earth and beyond, assisted by a quintet that included Sonny Sharrock on guitar and Dave Burrell on piano. [9]

Pharoah Sanders: *Jewels of Thought* (1969, Impulse) Two side-long pieces, the saxophonist sounding superb except when he occasionally coughs up a chunk of lung, which can be harrowing; the double basses can hold your attention for long vamps, and percussion is suitably exotic, and Leon Thomas alternately warbles and wows. [8]

Pharoah Sanders: *Village of the Pharoahs* (1971-73, Impulse) The three-part title piece conjures up a utopian tribalism, roots projected into an ever changing rhythmic unity. Vocalist Sedarius Brown gets a "featuring" credit on the cover, but the vocals just add to the ecstasy, as does the leader's soprano. [9]

Pharoah Sanders: *Wisdom Through Magic* (1973, Impulse) Variations on a vibe, powerful when it works, and bewildering when it doesn't. [7]

Pharoah Sanders: *Elevation* (1973, Impulse -05) The title piece is an 18-minute rough retreat of "A Love Supreme"; the second side opens with infectious Nigerian juju, with Sanders singing instead of blowing; Joe Bonner's piano is central, but this wanders a lot, swamping everything in psychedelic percussion. [4]

Pharoah Sanders: *Oh Lord, Let Me Do No Wrong* (1987, CBS Special Products) Leon Thomas sings the title song, with some splendiferous saxophone blowing around the words. Next up is "Equinox": a Coltrane piece with pounded percussion and sax screech. Sanders has a unique sound that stretches, strives, pulls itself apart. This has both an electric piano (Donald Smith) and an acoustic one (William S. Henderson III). A rather beautiful "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" follows, then Thomas comes back for a blues, "If It Wasn't for a Woman." "Clear Out of This World" is a heavy-handed blowout piece; while Sanders often sounds terrific, the piano is not much better than pro forma, and the rhythm is positively dull. Finally, Thomas finishes with another blues, "Next Time You See Me," done hot and heavy. [+]

Randy Sandke

Randy Sandke: *The Chase* (1994, Concord -95) This starts off with a startling boppish burst, and throughout seems to be a lot more modern than one expects from Sandke. The band here includes Ray Anderson and Chris Potter, which is part of the reason. The guests include Michael Brecker, another modernist, and Scott Robinson, who's not. The whole thing has that glitzy feel that I've come to associate with Potter -- more brass just adds to the metallic aftertaste of the sacharine. [4]

Randy Sandke: *Calling All Cats* (1995, Concord -96) A more typical set from Sandke. The band is

similar in size to *The Chase*, but the hot dogs are gone, so even though there's still a lot of horns -- Scott Robinson (three saxes), Joel Helleny (trombone), Chuck Wilson (alto sax on 4 tracks), Gary Keller (tenor sax on the same 4 tracks) -- it gives Sandke more room to play his trumpet (plus one track of piano and another of guitar, although the tasty guitar belongs to Howard Alden). Nice, relaxed record, with lots of trumpet. [+]

Randy Sandke: *Cliffhanger* (1999, Nagel Heyer -03) Another old fashioned trumpeter, who cut a series of bright, fun, but less than spectacular albums for Concord, and has now moved on to the German label. I haven't heard <i>The Re-Discovered Louis and Bix</i> (4-star rated in the Penguin Guide), but this is by far the best one I have heard. The band is superb -- especially the Washingtons, which you expect by now, but also Mulgrew Miller and Harry Allen, both of whom prefer to run flat out. The ballad features focus more on Sandke, and he acquits himself well there. [8]

Moacir Santos

Moacir Santos: *Ouro Negro* (1965-92, Adventure Music -2CD -04) It's tempting to think of Santos as a Brazilian Quincy Jones, minus the business skills; Santos toiled as arranger, composer and conductor behind stars like Milton Nascimento, Gilberto Gil and João Bosco, who sing a track each here; his own pieces were typically named "Thing" followed by a number, a modest appellation for the basic building blocks of Brazilian popular music -- all revealed here. [9]

Heikki Sarmanto

Heikki Sarmanto: *A Boston Date* (1970, Porter -08) Finnish pianist, bills his quintet as The Serious Music Ensemble, plays advanced freebop with Lance Gunderson's guitar tightening the rhythmic weave and Juhani Aaltonen's tenor sax waxing eloquent; Aaltonen is one of the world's most underappreciated saxophonists -- young then, still active 40 years later -- and this is his showcase. [9]

Heikki Sarmanto Quintet: *Counterbalance* (1971, Porter -08) Same group, give or take a bassist, but a different sound and gestalt, more fusion with Sarmanto's tinkly electric piano, rarefied but not quite ethereal with Juhani Aaltonen restricting himself to flute. [6]

Heikki Sarmanto Big Band: *Everything Is It* (1972, Porter -11) Finnish pianist, influenced by George Russell, ran an interesting avant-fusion band in the early 1970s, later became artistic director of UMO Jazz Orchestra. The latter was prefigured by this big band: long on reeds (including Eero Koivistoinen and Juhani Aaltonen, names you should know by now), short on brass (three trumpets, two trombones), doubled up on drums. Noisy as these things go, which is fine with me. Main problem for me is Taru Valjakka's soprano-diva vocals on the "Marat" suite. [6]

Dieter Scherf

Dieter Scherf Trio: *Inside-Outside Reflections* (1974, Atavistic -05) I wonder how impressive this sounded when it first came out. Scherf plays alto and bari sax, clarinet, bass clarinet, and piano, but I've never heard of him, or for that matter bassist Jacek Bednarek -- the only "name" here is drummer Paul Lovens. But Scherf's saxophones are more or less the model for innumerable free blowing sessions to follow. [7]

Mario Schiano

Mario Schiano: *On the Waiting List* (1973, Atavistic -04) Two, three, many horns pop out of the free rhythmic turmoil, the efforts at harmony mutating in strange ways. [+]

Lalo Schifrin

Lalo Schifrin: *Piano, Strings and Bossa Nova* (1962, Verve -08) Argentine pianist, best known later for his soundtracks and quasi-classical *Jazz Meets the Symphony* fare, but at the time worked for Dizzy Gillespie; the arrangements are every bit as straightforward and obvious as the title. [5]

Loren Schoenberg

The Loren Schoenberg Quartet: *S'Posin'* (1990, Musicmasters -91) Tenor saxophonist, perhaps best known as a historian and writer, especially for his relationship with Benny Goodman; with bass, drums, and Kenny Werner on piano, a couple originals and standards including the title tune by Paul Gonsalves. [7]

Manfred Schoof

Manfred Schoof: *European Echoes* (1969, Atavistic -02) Two LP-side-long bashes with a 16-piece avant band, distinguished not by teamwork but by blistering solos from the young men who moved the movement: saxophonists Evan Parker and Peter Brötzmann, guitarist Derek Bailey, pianists Fred Van Hove and Alexander von Schlippenbach, and ultimately the undersung trumpeter-leader. [8]

George Schuller

George Schuller/The Schulldogs: *Tenor Tantrums* (1999, New World) Great title, don't you think? Still, Schuller's just a drummer, so what does he know? The two tenor saxes here are wielded by Tony Malaby and George Garzone. Malaby's control is so complete one isn't tempted to describe anything he does as a tantrum. Garzone has had his fringe moments (if you know what I mean), but he seems to have mellowed with age. This actually has that nice, slightly abstract sound to it, giving everyone a little elbow room without wandering too far. [+]

Irène Schweizer

Irène Schweizer/Louis Moholo (1986, Intakt -96) Swiss avant-pianist, one of a handful of duo albums with drummers, this one a expat from South Africa, who brings along his baggage; cf. the lovely township jive of "Angel," sandwiched between "Free Mandela" and "Exile (Song for Johnny Dyani/Africa[na]/We Will Win the War" -- some exceptional piano in the latter. [7]

Irène Schweizer/Günter Sommer (1987, Intakt -96) Piano-drums duets, the drummer also from Switzerland, their relationship and rapport deep, he springs her loose for some of her most dynamic playing, lightning runs and thundering rolls. [9]

Irène Schweizer/Andrew Cyrille (1988, Intakt -96) Piano-drums again, the drummer born in New York of a Haitian mother, went on to a long stretch playing with Cecil Taylor; Schweizer gets compared to

Taylor a lot as few other pianists are as surprising or as volatile, but unlike Taylor she never loses the rhythm completely, with or without a drummer, and Cyrille is one of the best. [9]

Irène Schweizer/Pierre Favre (1990, Intakt -92) Piano-drums duets, again, with another Swiss drummer; again, some of the most remarkable piano of the era, an irresistible rhythmic force; perhaps the best of the drum-duets series . . . [10]

Irène Schweizer/Han Bennink (1995, Intakt -96) . . . Or maybe this one is: more piano-drums, this time with the great Dutch percussionist, as lively as ever, able to work in a swing feel even in anarchic time; again, the pianist is outstanding. [10]

John Scofield

John Scofield: *Still Warm* (1985, Gramavision -86) Early album, not as firmly anchored as his later groovers, not a lot of variety either; more interesting was Don Grolnick on electric keys. [5]

Jimmy Scott

Little Jimmy Scott: *Everybody's Somebody's Fool* (1950-52, Verve -08) Early, and rather starchy, sides with the diminutive singer backed by big bands led by Lionel Hampton, Billy Taylor, and Lucky Thompson, snarfed up from the Decca catalog; a reissue of a 1999 compilation, which seems like a violation of the series rules. [4]

Raymond Scott

Raymond Scott: *The Music of Raymond Scott: Reckless Nights and Turkish Twilights* (1937-40, Columbia/Legacy -92) Composer, inventor, pianist, "the man who made cartoons swing, as the liner notes subhed puts it"; this documents his quintet, when he emerged from the shadows to score some hits; clever, to tightly arranged to really swing. [8]

Ronnie Scott

Ronnie Scott: *The Night Is Scott and You're So Swingable* (1964-65, Redial -98) The strings I could pretty much do without, but they're only minimally intrusive here: the real show is Scott's tenor saxophone, which is authoritative and often quite beautiful. [+]

Shirley Scott

Organ player, I always figured she learned in church but she cited Jimmy Smith as her inspiration. Best known for working with tenor saxophonists -- Stanley Turrentine, of course, but also Eddie Davis -- but can hold court on her own.

Shirley Scott: *For Members Only* (1963, Impulse) From when records had two sides, the first with a brass-heavy Oliver Nelson orchestra, the second with her trio; the first a bit anonymous except for the pulsing organ, the latter with Mundell Lowe on guitar a bit deflated. [5]

Shirley Scott: *Great Scott!!* (1964, Impulse) Again, one side with Oliver Nelson's orchestra, some

reeds added to the brass, the other her trio with Barry Galbraith on guitar. She sings one, but shows little pain. [5]

Shirley Scott: *Queen of the Organ* (1964, Impulse -93): Few artists recorded more with Impulse than Scott, who totalled nine albums; one of her best, befitting the title, with husband Stanley Turrentine deep and soulful. [9]

Tony Scott

Tony Scott (1967, Verve -04) The clarinetist on a mission to seek out the future in the past, exploring old jazz standards like Ellington and "My Funny Valentine" and trans-Asian exotica with oud, dumbek and sitar. The repertoire is split between two groups, one conventional, the other exotic; as such it is tempted to fall into two parts, but the clarinet binds them together, the search made palpable. [9]

Gil Scott-Heron

The Best of Gil Scott-Heron (1970-84, Arista) Back in the day I reacted negatively to Scott-Heron's combination of agitprop, light funk, and smooth jazz. One record, *From South Africa to South Carolina* (1975) is still remembered in my database as a grade C. I was so turned off I never bothered with any of Scott-Heron's A-list albums (as my friend Robert Christgau graded them), including this retrospective of Scott-Heron's decade with Arista. But I've bumped into "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" frequently of late, and I find it as striking as it's meant to be. It's included here, the only pre-Arista cut. It's the best thing here, but the Reagan-era "'B' Movie" comes close, partly because it's another rap over jazz vamp, partly because it's got something to say: "what has happened is that in the last 20 years, america has changed from a producer to a consumer, and all consumers know that when the producer names the tune -- the consumer has got to dance . . . the idea concerns the fact that this country wants nostalgia. they want to go back as far as they can -- even if it's only as far as last week. not to face now or tomorrow, but to face backwards. and yesterday was the day of our cinema heroes riding to the rescue at the last possible moment . . . they looked for people like John Wayne. but since John Wayne was no longer available, they settled for Ronald Reagan -- and it has placed us in a situation that we can only look at -- like a "B" movie. come with us back to those inglorious days when heroes weren't zeros . . . when the buck stopped somewhere and you could still buy something with it." Of course, some of it's dated: "John Foster Dulles ain't nothing but the name of an airport now." Make that Reagan International Airport. [+]

Don Sebesky

Don Sebesky: *Giant Box* (1973, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) Arranger, came up through the Stan Kenton band, hooked up with Creed Taylor at Verve where he dropped *Don Sebesky and the Jazz-Rock Syndrome*, then moved on to CTI where he had a hand in a couple dozen records; this originally came out in a 2-LP box, not so giant then and less so neatly fit onto a single CD; cover lists a dozen featured artists, with Freddie Hubbard listed first and the standout; music from Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff, Joni Mitchell, John McLaughlin, and Jimmy Webb (trying his hand at gospel), plus three Sebesky originals; a mixed bag, with sublime stretches and odd patches -- at least here he's taking credit instead of messing up someone else's record, and stuck with the credit he's on his best behavior. [5]

Brian Setzer

Brian Setzer Orchestra: *The Dirty Boogie* (1998, Interscope) This is fun enough for the first two cuts, even though they are best taken as jokes. This is a retro-swing big band, the sort of band that likes "Jump Jive an' Wail" because it's hot, but they're only tolerable as long as they keep it hot. In that regard, "Sleepwalk" fails miserably -- some sort of Hawaiian steel guitar thing. And nothing after that rises to the level of the first two songs -- not even "Jump Jive an' Wail." [3]

Linda Sharrock

Linda Sharrock/Eric Watson: *Listen to the Night* (1994, Owl/Sunnyside -07) Compared to her 1969-75 collaborations with avant jazz guitarist Sonny Sharrock, this is a conventional jazz vocal album, with Watson's piano the only backing; Sharrock's rich, dusky voice fits a tradition that dates back to Sarah Vaughan, handling hit-and-miss originals and an especially striking take on "Lover Man." [7]

Sonny Sharrock

Sonny Sharrock: *Black Woman* (1969, Water -05): Previously released as a Collectables twofer with an unrelated and inessential Wayne Henderson funk album; wife Linda shrieks and screams, but that's nothing compared to the Aylerian frenzy of Sonny's guitar; Dave Burrell and Milford Graves keep up and occasionally pull ahead. [9]

Artie Shaw

Artie Shaw: *His First Three Bands: 1936-1940* (1936-40, Jazz Legends -03) His career, both as clarinetist and bandleader, follows Benny Goodman's model, but more reckless, both because he was more cerebral and more passionate. He never built up the talent reservoir that Goodman enjoyed, possibly because of the speed with which he assembled and discarded his bands -- three in these five years, with more to come, until in a snit he hung up his clarinet, never to play again for the last fifty years of a remarkable life. [9]

Artie Shaw: *Jazz Moods: Hot* (1938-45, Bluebird/Legacy -05) In accordance with the "hot" theme, these tracks were picked more for their shiny, pounding brass than for the leader's plucky clarinet, but Shaw's bands could play in Woody Herman's league as well as in Benny Goodman's. The overlap from the earlier comp is the inevitable "Begin the Beguine." [+]

The Essential Artie Shaw (1936-53, Bluebird/Legacy -2CD -05) Two pre-1938 and three post-1941 offer just a taste of where he came from and where he went, but the concentration on his 1938-41 Bluebirds isn't just the usual corporate chauvinism -- it's where the focus should be. Whereas his early bands weren't much different than others, his use of strings in the 1940 band that released "Frenesi" and "Temptation" was unprecedented and unmatched. [9]

Woody Shaw

Woody Shaw: *Blackstone Legacy* (1970, Contemporary -99) Possibly Shaw's first album as a leader -- *Cassandrite* was mostly recorded earlier, but came out later -- a blistering sextet initially spread out over two LPs, six songs on four sides; saxophonists Bennie Maupin and Gary Bartz claim their space

and play rough, which turns the trumpeter on. [7]

Woody Shaw: *Little Red's Fantasy* (1976, Savoy Jazz -10) Three originals, plus compositions from bassist Stafford James and pianist Ronnie Matthews, in a quintet with Frank Strozier on alto sax and Eddie Moore on drums; a little weak to start, and the postbop tendency to rumble along never quite gains traction. [6]

Woody Shaw: *Rosewood* (1977, Columbia -78) The trumpeter's first major label album is majorly ambitious, the crack quintet of two cuts expanding to big band strength on the balance, with bandmates Onaje Alan Gumbs, Clint Houston, and Victor Lewis contributing songs; not sure if the title reflects on the 1923 massacre in Florida that John Singleton turned into his surreal 1998 film, but the album was reissued at the time. [7]

Woody Shaw: *Stepping Stones: Live at the Village Vanguard* (1978, Columbia/Legacy -05) Live quintet shot, with Carter Jefferson (tenor and soprano sax), Onaje Alan Gumbs (piano), Clint Houston (bass), and Victor Lewis (drums); hard to think of this as postbop given that they're still enthralled by the notion that speed is all that matters; matches the 2005 reissue, which lost one track from the 1979 original but picked up three (two previously unreleased). [6]

Woody Shaw: *Woody III* (1979, Columbia) All originals, starting with three numbered, self-named pieces arranged for a dozen musicians, with the fourth piece reduced to a sextet with dueling alto saxophonists Rene McLean and James Spaulding, and the saxes trimmed for the closer so the leader can wind up. [6]

Woody Shaw: *For Sure!* (1979-80, Columbia -80) Larry Willis moves into the piano chair and contributes a song, but only 2 (of 7) songs are limited to Shaw's quintet (Curtis Fuller's trombone the second horn), the rest adding extra brass (Steve Turre), reeds (Gary Bartz, Carter Jefferson, James Spaulding), percussion (Nana Vasconcelos), and strings; the latter threaten to ick up the works, but the trumpet is sharp and bracing, clearing the air. [6]

Woody Shaw: *United* (1981, Columbia) Quintet plus Gary Bartz (alto sax) on 2 (of 6) cuts, Steve Turre's trombone the second horn, Mulgrew Miller in the piano seat, Tony Reedus taking over the drum slot, title song by Wayne Shorter; the least ambitious and least exciting album in the series, and also the last, not that the trumpet doesn't have a few sterling moments. [5]

Woody Shaw: *Woody Plays Woody* (1977-81, Savant -12) Previously released material, live from Keystone Korner in San Francisco, five cuts from 1977, one from 1981; all originals to show off the leader's compositional skills, but of course they're mostly frameworks for hot and heavy trumpet blowing. [6]

Woody Shaw: *Night Music* (1982, Elektra Musician -83) Hoping for a little quiet storm, but the only time this slows below a gallop is on the closing "All the Things You Are," which gives the trumpet some room but loses the band; trombonist Steve Turre doesn't offer much as second horn, nor does "special guest" Bobby Hutcherson (on vibes). [4]

George Shearing

George Shearing: *The Very Best* (1955-69, Capitol Jazz -05) The blind British pianist worked most often with a quintet, adding vibes and guitar to the usual trio, sophisticated wrinkles which if anything

leavened the loaf, as did his fondness for latin rhythms. Cuts with extra strings or big band add a sour note but not much gravity. Even his famous bop anthem, "Lullaby of Birdland," was meant to put you to sleep. [5]

Archie Shepp

Tenor saxophonist, a stalwart avant-gardist from 1964 who moved sharply political around 1968, growing some ugly funk beats and adding vocals as if daring the masses to follow his revolution.

Archie Shepp: *The New York Contemporary Five* (1963, Delmark -10) A primeval avant-garde group with Shepp's tenor sax, John Tchicai's alto sax, and Don Cherry's cornet wrestling for the spotlight, roughing up Ornette Coleman and pushing one original each; actually just half of a live set from Copenhagen previously available on Sonet and Storyville. [8]

Archie Shepp: *For Losers* (1968-69, Impulse) Three originals, one each from Duke Ellington and Cal Massey, cut in three sessions shuttling a large cast of well known musicians in and out. Leon Thomas and Doris Troy shout out "Stick 'Em Up" -- his lead cut -- while Chinalin Sharpe's "got it bad" and runs through his title poem. [8]

Archie Shepp: *Kwanza* (1968-69, Impulse) Same cast of dozens rotating through the same sessions: hard to say why this took longer to come out, other than fewer vocals -- just his original "Spoo Pee Doo"; on the other hand, the instruments are both funkier -- especially the monster vamp on "Back Back" -- and freer. Moreover, the combined albums build solidarity. [9]

Archie Shepp: *Black Gipsy* (1969, Free America/Verve -05) Sounds thin and whiney at first, with a lot of action from an oddly matched group, the most impressive member violinist Leroy Jenkins; Shepp sticks to soprano sax, never really taking charge, while Chicago Beau crashes the party with a blues shout. [5]

Archie Shepp: *Attica Blues* (1972, Impulse -03) The title track is an urgent, furious piece of gospel -- his big band of jazz vanguardists (some of the more famous names are Clifford Thornton, Marion Brown, Leroy Jenkins, Lakshinarayana Shankar, and Beaver Harris) provides a vibrant undertow to the vocal fury. Then we get 18 seconds of William Kunstler, reading William G. Harris' "Invocation." "Steam Part 1" is more of a hymn. A second "Invocation to Mr. Parker" is narrated by Bartholomew Gray, with Marion Brown on flute and percussion and Jimmy Garrison on bass. A second part to "Steam" then wafts in, with Brown's bamboo flute, Shepp's sax, the violins, Cornell Dupree's guitar, and Jimmy Garrison on bass; then finally the vocal by Joe Lee Wilson resumes. Second side opens with "Blues for Brother George Jackson." Kunstler does another narration. "Quiet Dawn" closes on a slightly elegiac note -- the awkward vocals on top of a calm, rolling piece of considerable musical strength. Shepp's record represents an interesting juncture between the jazz avant-garde and populist soul music (presumably what Gil Scott-Heron was trying to do, although I've never bought into that). [9]

Archie Shepp: *The Cry of My People* (1972, Impulse -04) Following *Attica Blues*, Shepp goes overboard in his black church gospel schtick. As an impresario, his choirs and strings and conductors and arrangers and conspiracy with the almighty go so far over the top that it's almost campy. As a musician, Shepp is far and away the best thing here -- his few tenor solos are remarkably phrased, completely cogent, and his soprano solo on "African Drum Suite" is tricky and a little scary but

effective. Shepp only wrote two songs here, but they're the best ones, in large part because they are the most joyous. (Ellington's "Come Sunday" is sunk under Jon Lee Wilson's vocal -- the liner notes compare him to Billy Eckstine, which in my book is faint praise, to which I'd add "not even"; Shepp doesn't sing, but we now know that he's better than Wilson -- though maybe not Eckstine.) [5]

Archie Shepp: *I Know About the Life* (1981, Hatology -03) Après le deluge, Shepp marks time with a solid quartet, two sides that start fast and end slow, with Monks fore and aft and a Trane in the middle; my fave is his one original best, the tautly muscled title piece, but he always sounds distinctive, unflustered, in control. [+]

Archie Shepp: *St. Louis Blues* (1998, PAO -99) He sings on two covers, briefly, creakily, toward the end. He plays everything slow, and his tone seems a bit fragile, like he's getting old. Murray and Davis rarely emerge, although Davis' arco solo on "Total Package" makes for some interesting interplay. The record moves progressively into avant-garde territory, much like he's intent on recapitulating the whole history of jazz, or at least the flow that matters most to him. [+]

Mark Shim

Mark Shim: *Mind Over Matter* (1997, Blue Note) I've been holding back on this record for quite a while now, not for lack of pleasure but just a certain skepticism that anything this finely crafted is really distinctive enough to get excited about. But in the end sheer pleasure wins out. And anyone willing to tackle "Remember Rockefeller at Attica" is worth getting excited about. [9]

Mark Shim: *Turbulent Flow* (1999, Blue Note) Quintet with Stefon Harris (vibes), Edward Simon (piano), Drew Gress (bass), Eric Harland (drums). Seems like yet another perfectly solid outing in the post-bop, post-avant style du jour. [+]

Matthew Shipp

Matthew Shipp: *Circular Temple* (1990, Infinite Zero) A trio with bass and drums, working their way through four movements that can only be described as difficult (as in Cecil Taylor difficult). The bass is, of course, the brilliant William Parker; drums by Whit Dickey. Evidently Shipp has always leaned on heavy chords. The *Penguin Guide* notes a connection to Andrew Hill as well as Taylor. Very striking work by all three hands. [+]

Matthew Shipp Quartet: *Critical Mass* (1994, 213 CD) With Parker, Dickey, and Mat Maneri, this is a rather abstract, disjointed work, themed to build a communal temple around a mass. Maneri's contribution is perhaps the most interesting aspect, in effect taking the lead role that a horn would normally assume. Doesn't seem to amount to much. [5]

Matthew Shipp Duo with William Parker: *Zo* (1994, Thirsty Ear). This may be the best example I've heard of Shipp in pure avant-garde mode -- the piano is much more rhythmic than most of his early work, and he's continuously engaged with Parker, who is, well, little short of awesome. Can't say that I get enough of this "Summertime" to make my mix tape, but the three "Zo" pieces are very engaging. [9]

Matthew Shipp: *Symbol Systems* (1995, No More) Solo piano; two short cuts, not a lot to go on, but characteristic. [5]

Matthew Shipp/Roscoe Mitchell: *2-Z* (1996, Thirsty Ear) Shipp's half of the duo is thoughtful and forceful; on the other hand, Mitchell tends toward the unlistenable, at least when he gets loud. I previously had this graded higher. [4]

Matthew Shipp/Joe Morris: *Thesis* (1997, Hatology) A duo with guitarist Joe Morris, a player I'm not very familiar with. I'm beginning to think that at this point in Shipp's development, a signature trait is that he works very deliberately, but that also seems to be the case with Morris, whose delicate one-note lines weave their way around Shipp's chords. [5]

Matthew Shipp Quartet: *The Flow of X* (1997, Thirsty Ear) Again, with Parker, Dickey and Maneri. Shipp has a little essay on "Boxing and Jazz," which reads like semiotics ("a system of symbols that generates the language of each"). I suspect, however, that there is a fundamental difference, which is that boxing is more constrained to one specific goal (physical domination of an opponent), whereas improvisation can go many ways in addition to many routes. Also, of course, boxing is more prone to disruption -- an opponent may all of a sudden reroute you. Considering that aleatory is too chin up for my taste. As for the music, it gets better when they pick up the pace, following a rhythm rather than just plotting out symbols. This only happens a couple of times, on the third cut ("Flow of Y"), where Parker shows some real swing, and on the finale, which is what NRG is meant to be. Elsewhere there are good spots for all (and I'm getting to like Dickey quite a bit), but it's still pretty symbolic. [+]

Matthew Shipp: *The Multiplication Table* (1998, Hatology) Trio, with Parker and Susie Ibarra on drums. In some ways this is the best (or anyway the first) good showcase for Shipp's style, in part because piano trios are rather conventional and in part because Shipp tackles two Ellington pieces which, as is often the case with avant jazz, helps by providing a familiar anchor for the improvisations. Again, Shipp relies mostly on the sharp, percussive chords that are his trademark. Not quite a breakthrough, but a very strong record. [9]

Matthew Shipp/Mat Maneri: *Gravitational Systems* (1998, Hatology) Another duo. Sometimes I think Shipp is overeducated: a string of top-notch music schools, plus tutoring from various well known players. One result of this is that when people describe his influences, the names that pop up are as likely to come from the classical modernists as from jazz. Maybe it's just the violin, or maybe the absence of bass/drums (i.e., rhythm), but this sounds pretty steeped in modern classicism. Again, it helps to do something familiar, and "Greensleeves" is at times starkly beautiful. [5]

Matthew Shipp/William Parker: *DNA* (1999, Thirsty Ear) Piano and bass. In the notes Shipp writes about mature improvisors, which certainly describes him and Parker. Starts with "When Johnny Come Marching Home," which Shipp states, deconstructs until it nearly fades from view, then reconstructs again, while Parker saws a shifting counterwhine: a simple and attractive example of what they do. "Amazing Grace" is a brief coda. Between these recognizable ends everything else is pretty abstract. [+]

Dinah Shore

Dinah Shore: *The Essential RCA Recordings* (1940-57, Taragon/BMG) A major pop singer of the post-big band period, she had a clear voice and sang impeccably over modest string orchestras and occasional latin beats, none of which (save the cute and cheesy "Love and Marriage") has much lasting value. I don't know, but rather doubt that there is a better collection of her work. [+]

Alan Shorter

Alan Shorter: *Tes Esat* (1970, Free America/Verve -05) Wayne's trumpeter brother is nominal leader but relatively inaudible as South Africans Gary Windo and Johnny Dyani dominate, the latter working in some mischievous piano as well as his usual bass, the former just noisy. [3]

Wayne Shorter

Wayne Shorter: *Wayning Moments* (1962, Vee Jay) Nice outing, especially for the trumpet player (Freddie Hubbard). [+]

Wayne Shorter: *The Soothsayer* (1965, Blue Note -09) One of his later Blue Note Sessions, unreleased until 1980, probably because the pieces didn't add up until we started to yearn for classic performances from Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams, and the leader, but not necessarily alto saxophonist James Spaulding, who seems like the odd cat out. [6]

Wayne Shorter: *The All Seeing Eye* (1965, Blue Note -94) This was cut in the middle of a hot stretch of albums for Shorter, following *Speak No Evil* (1964) and preceding *Adam's Apple* (1966), while Shorter was on top of the world with the Miles Davis Quintet. Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter are along for the ride, with Joe Chambers on drums, and Freddie Hubbard as Miles, but two extra horns are present: volatile James Spaulding on alto, and Grachan Moncur III on trombone. (Plus Alan Shorter for the final cut.) Moreover, it's clear from the titles that the program is meant to be heavy: Shorter's originals are called, "The All Seeing Eye," "Geneis," "Chaos," and "Face of the Deep." (Wayne's little brother penned the finale, the slightly mischievous "Mephistopheles.") This comes off as a composer's album, the rhythm spare, the horns carefully deployed. [+]

Wayne Shorter: *The Classic Blue Note Recordings* (1960-89, Blue Note -2CD -02) The first disc distills Shorter's solo albums into something stronger and more coherent than any of its sources; the second disc collects sideman performances, mostly from the Blakey years. I always thought he was overrated, but this impresses the hell out of me. [10]

Wayne Shorter: *Native Dancer* (1974, Columbia/Legacy -91) From 1959-70 Shorter released a ton of work under his own name while starring in Art Blakey's and Miles Davis's most legendary groups. Between 1970 and 1985 he was preoccupied with Weather Report and limited himself to this one Brazilian-themed release. Milton Nascimento croons, Airtio Moreira nudges the rhythm along, Herbie Hancock slums, the saxophonist occasionally rises above it all, but more often toys with his soprano. [4]

Wayne Shorter: *High Life* (1994, Verve) Marcus Miller's fusion mix here is dull and cloying, leaving little space for Shorter, who doesn't do much with it even when he gets the chance. [3]

Horace Silver

Horace Silver: *Horace Silver & the Jazz Messengers* (1954-55, Blue Note -05) Back when the hard bop grandpop was a sprout this is where he invented the east coast's answer to cool jazz; after the divorce, drummer Art Blakey got custody of the band, and the legend. [9]

The Horace Silver Quintet: *Silver's Blue* (1956, Epic/Legacy -05) The title blues is a prototype for many more to come, a good idea that Silver would eventually hone into a brilliant one; there are other

bright spots, especially when Hank Mobley plays, but as a whole the album never quite clicks. [5]

Horace Silver: *Silver's Serenade* (1963, Blue Note -06) Silver's quintets were mostly interchangeable, but this line-up was a bit shy of the others: Blue Mitchell and Junior Cook tended to blare in unison, while Gene Taylor and Roy Brooks overreacted; center, of course, was Silver's piano, a rollicking gospel-tinged party machine. [5]

Horace Silver: *The Very Best* (1954-66, Blue Note -05) The opening bars to "Song for My Father" will be familiar to any Steely Dan fan: it's where "Rikki Don't Lose That Number" came from. That's just one of eight pieces of pop, not just jazz, genius collected here. Silver called one of his later albums *The Hard Bop Grand-Pop*, but even that claim short-changes him. He was the first leader of the Jazz Messengers, and while drummer Art Blakey kept the name, Silver's quintets over the next dozen years kept a tighter, more distinctive sound than Blakey's bands ever had -- even though the trumpets and tenor saxes changed at least as frequently. The secret was that Silver wrote while Blakey depended on his band for compositions. Also that Silver had an amazing knack for pulling blues and gospel hooks out of thin air. Bebop freed the musician to ply his tricks outside of the musical matrix; hard boppers like Silver brought the tricks back down to earth, to serve the music. [10]

Horace Silver: *The United States of Mind* (1970-72, Blue Note -2CD -04) He always sounds like he's just come from church, but this time he brought the choir with him, preaching and signifying, hell bent on raising the race not to mention the rafters; focus on the words and you're bound to lose faith, but your ass knows better. [+]

Sonny Simmons

Sonny Simmons: *The Complete ESP-Disk' Recordings* (1966, ESP-Disk -2CD -05) Simmons was past 30 when he cut his first two albums. Both feature his wife Barbara Donald on trumpet, the first in a quintet with a young John Hicks on piano, the second a sextet with Michael Cohen on piano and Bert Wilson on tenor sax. Before arriving in New York, Simmons had played alto sax mostly in r&b bands, but he had an exceptional sense of the connections between Parker, Coleman and Dolphy, and he sums them up with fierce logic and cunning, even advancing the state of the art a bit. A few years later he returned to the West Coast, fell on hard times, lost his family, became a homeless junkie, scratching for change playing on the streets. He finally got a gig from someone who remembered these albums, cleaned up and came back with a vengeance, turning in his finest work at an age when most people hope to be retired. Both discs are padded with interviews, but the man's got history. [9]

Sonny Simmons: *Jewels* (1991, Boxholder -04) The problem is that solo saxophone is inherently unlistenable. It just produces one tone, and there's nothing to fill in or carry past the breaks in the breathing. Bobby Watson got around these limitations by doing a lot of short, melodic pieces. Anthony Braxton did the opposite, to mixed reviews. Jimmy Lyons sounded much like he was practicing. Simmons sounds like an average of those approaches: melodic fragments embedded in pieces ranging from 8:40 to 19:00. [5]

Sonny Simmons Trio: *Transcendence* (1996, CIMP) An unusual trio configuration, with two reeds and drums. Simmons plays alto sax. Michael Marcus complements him, playing strich and manzello, the odd reeds Roland Kirk first brought to our attention. The drummer is Charles Moffett. (Had to look this up: this one is Charles Sr., 1929-1997, father of bassist Charnett, drummer Codaryl [aka Cody], vocalist Charisse, trumpeter Mondre, tenor saxophonist Charles Jr. Charles Sr., who is best known for

playing with Ornette Coleman, died a little less than a year after this date.) The two reeds gallop together then twist and turn off in various directions, the tones close but contrasting. It's an unusual setup, and works marvelously here. [9]

Nina Simone

Nina Simone: *Pastel Blues/Let It All Out* (1964-65, Mercury) An impressive singer, with at least a handful of astonishing songs to her credit (including "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" here), I've yet to find an album that lives up to her talent. This one, at least, acquits itself well -- no terrible clunkers or embarrassing gaffes, consistent, solid. The search goes on. [+]

Nina Simone's Finest Hour (1964-66, Verve -00) Usually filed under jazz, but usually ignored by jazz guides, she doesn't really fit anywhere, and I find her work perplexing and more than a little bit annoying. I'm hard pressed to tell you why I find "Wild Is the Wind" so dislikable yet "I Put a Spell on You," similarly paced and even more string-laden, impresses me -- better song, of course. "Work Song" is first rate -- fits her like a glove. Most of these pieces have a stripped down, live feel: good showcase for her piano, OK for her deep, striking voice. But the material drags down quite a bit, and thuds at the end. [4]

Nina Simone: *Sings the Blues* (1966-69, RCA/Legacy -06) She has the pipes to be a great blues singer, and she can boogie a little on piano, but she's too fussy to turn in a straight blues album, even when that's the concept; this comes close enough to make you think she could do better; "Backlash Blues" belongs on her message tape, "I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl" on her hits, "Since I Fell for You" is a good cover with a little harmonica. [5]

Nina Simone: *Forever Young, Gifted and Black: Songs of Freedom and Spirit* (1967-69, RCA/Legacy -06): She was meant to sing her secular civil rights hymns, but "Backlash Blues" and "Mississippi Goddam" slip a bit in live versions, so the only song here that delivers all she can do is "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free"; filler from Dylan, the Byrds, and *Hair* don't cut it, and two takes of the title song have been permanently scorched by Bob & Marcia's ska version. [5]

Nina Simone: *Silk & Soul* (1967-69, RCA/Legacy -06) It's hard to convey just how awful her "Cherish" is, but how much can you penalize an album for one song? Depends on whether there's anything else on it you'd ever want to hear again. [2]

Just Like a Woman: Nina Simone Sings Classic Songs of the '60s (1967-78, RCA/Legacy -07) Strong voice, can be a powerful stylist, has no problem convincing you that she's entitled to interpret anything she wants, which makes her inconsistencies and flat out muffs all the more annoying; four Dylan songs here, two -- "I Shall Be Released," "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues" -- worth keeping. [5]

Nina Simone: *Let It Be Me* (1980, Verve -09) Live set, small group, her piano prominent, her voice worn and weary, her key songs done better elsewhere, the extras dross. [1]

Nina Simone: *For Lovers* (1964-87, Verve -05) As absurd a concept as awarding Henry Kissinger the Nobel Peace Prize, but they still should have been able to come up with something more amorous than "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" -- nor does piling the strings on help. [1]

Nina Simone: *The Soul of Nina Simone* (1963-87, RCA/Legacy -05) Aside from one much later Verve track thrown in for no obvious reason, this is a rather arbitrary selection of her '60s tracks, with

no discernible theme except that life is hard but she's hard too; half of the tracks are remarkable, and not even the "Porgy and Bess Medley" sucks, so figure this to be one of her more consistent comps. [6]

Nina Simone: *Anthology* (1957-93, RCA/BMG Heritage -2CD -03) She had a voice that conveyed a lot of authority: deep, full, sometimes furious, always proud. But she made maddeningly inconsistent albums, which in turn yielded maddeningly inconsistent compilations. I've heard half a dozen, and while I have no doubt that this is the best, I wish it was better. The main problem is rooted in her lack of any consistent musical style. While her voice was unmistakable, and her piano distinctive, her choice of songs was all over the map, and she tended to follow them rather than make them her own. Except, that is, when she did, as with "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" and "To Love Somebody" (from the Bee Gees). Other high points include a classic Ray Charles take on "Trouble in Mind," a plaintive "Ne Me Quitte Pas," and the in-your-face "Mississippi Goddam." The problem is not a shortfall of worthy performances; it's that they don't cohere. Her fans don't mind this, but her critics do, and you probably know where you stand. As a critic, I can say that the first disc, sampling her early work on Bethlehem, Colpix, and Phillips, is as good as she gets, and the second, focusing on her period with RCA, is as typically uneven. I could do without the Beatles, the Dylan, the Jimmy Webb, the Daryl Hall, the piece from *Hair*, and especially the strings on "A Single Woman" -- but those, too, were her thing. The search to make sense of her stops here. [9]

Zoot Sims

Zoot Sims: *Compatibility* (1955, Delmark -13) Four tracks first released as Hall Daniels Septet, then more takes in 1977 under Sims and Dick Nash, plus more takes of the same four songs; Sims can claim them because he went on to a major career, but the key things here are section-work and swing. [6]

Zoot Sims/Bob Brookmeyer: *Tonite's Music Today* (1956, Black Lion) Early, something of a mixed bag, but Sims kicks in with several marvellous stretches. [+]

Zoot Sims with the Joe Castro Trio: *Live at Falcon Lair* (1956, Pablo -04) Sims plays alto sax here, lighter and airier than his tenor, but his innate sense of swing keeps him from floating off into the stratosphere. [+]

Frank Sinatra

Frank Sinatra & Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra: *Learn to Croon* (1940-42, Buddha -99) Air shots from early on, lots of Dorsey, a little bit of Frank (sounding pretty good), but nothing all that special. [5]

Frank Sinatra: *Where Are You* (1957, Capitol) One of the real slow ones, which means you have to listen real hard to realize just how perfect it is. Real hard. [5]

Frank Sinatra: *Come Swing With Me!* (1961, Capitol -91) The conventional wisdom seems to be that Sinatra's last album for Capitol was rather rote. I've never been much of a fan myself, and I've often singled out Billy May's bands for my opprobrium -- I can't begin to fault *Songs for Swingin' Lovers*, but even there I wound up giving much of the credit to Nelson Riddle, turning even that into a backhanded swipe at May. Still, five cuts into this and I haven't heard anything to suggest that he's not one of the all-time great singers, working in front of one real sharp orch. "Yes Indeed" is actually resplendent in its brassiness. They're maybe a little lighter than they ought to be with "On the Sunny Side of the

Street" and "That Old Black Magic" -- great songs that hold up to almost any abuse, and the delicacy here is far from abuse. Beyond that it doesn't quite sustain, and no, he isn't really licensed for "I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues." But he's sure gotta right to sing. [9]

Frank Sinatra: *Strangers in the Night* (1966, Reprise) Short -- ten songs, only three of which crack three minutes, only one topping 3:17. Breezy -- one of those rare Sinatra records where the arrangements (Nelson Riddle, natch) just carry the Voice along for the ride. Not that the Voice can quite keep up with "Downtown," but at a more stately pace it's far from shot. I'm impressed. [9]

Francis Albert Sinatra/Antonio Carlos Jobim: *The Complete Reprise Recordings* (1967, Concord -10) Sinatra waited to hop on the bossa nova bandwagon until it was going really slow, fitting with his newfound has-been status; his takes on "Dindi" and "The Girl From Ipanema" are especially pained, and the strings seem to be permanently wired into his hearing aid; the outtakes favor his usual material, which Jobim loosens up graciously. [4]

Frank Sinatra's Greatest Hits! (1964-67, Reprise -68) Curiously, this skips past the early Reprise period, with nothing from 1961-63. Still a great singer. Still has a penchant for awful orchestras. To some extent he was trying to cope with rock's hegemony, but the best stuff comes when he falls back, especially on Nelson Riddle. I figure 4-6 of these songs to be keepers; maybe half of the remainder work OK as filler. The albums these cuts come from are likely to be even worse, but the only one I know, *Strangers in the Night*, is quite good. I would imagine that a better Reprise comp is possible, but it doesn't seem all that likely that it actually exists. Given that, I'm tempted to grade this one leniently. [+]

Frank Sinatra: *Live at the Meadowlands* (1986, Concord -09) Big venue, big moneymaker, should work as a belated souvenir for anyone who caught Sinatra in his twilight, legend fully groomed, songbook amply stuffed; Nelson Riddle's orchestra is as perfunctory as ever; patter adds very little. [7]

Alan Skidmore

Alan Skidmore Quintet: *Once Upon a Time* (1970, Vocalion -05) Another one from the early days of England's avant-garde, with John Taylor and Kenny Wheeler more florid than you'd expect, and the leader channeling Coltrane. Harry Miller and Tony Oxley are also on board. Skidmore is actually the least well known of the group, but he keeps working and has some records out recently (not that I've heard them). [7]

Hal Smith

Hal Smith/Keith Ingham/Bobby Gordon: *Music From the Mauve Decades* (1993, Sackville) Drums-piano-clarinet trio, respectively, playing tunes that date from 1900-1920 ("the mauve decades"), so this predates trad jazz but that doesn't prevent the trio from swinging; Ingham is a natural here, Gordon eloquent, Smith gives it a little extra kick; found this looking up Smith, and this is the only album he has on Rhapsody (of a dozen or so). [7]

Jimmy Smith

Jimmy Smith: *At Club Baby Grand, Vol. 1* (1956, Blue Note -08) Early on, a guitar-organ-drums trio

live in Wilmington, Delaware; guitarist Thornel Schwartz never made a name for himself, but Smith is all over the machine, doing the things that made him famous, including enough ugliness in the lower registers to obviate the need for a bassist. [7]

Jimmy Smith: *At Club Baby Grand, Vol. 2* (1956, Blue Note -08) More of the same, "Caravan" giving the guitarist something sweet to chime in on, three more standards a lot of grist for the organ grinder. [6]

Jimmy Smith: *Cool Blues* (1958, Blue Note) A rip-roaring outing for the organ master, with a Charlie Parker tune and "A Night in Tunisia" to pick up the pace, but the saxophonists also excel: Tina Brooks you should know about already, but Lou Donaldson closes with a gorgeous ballad. Wonder why Donaldson's own soul grits albums don't rise to this level? Maybe it's the organ guy. [9]

Jimmy Smith: *Softly as a Summer Breeze* (1958, Blue Note -06) Standards fare with Smith comping lightly behind a series of light-handed guitarists -- Kenny Burrell, Eddie McFadden, Ray Crawford -- which despite some nice moments doesn't give you much of a feel for anyone involved; Bill Henderson sings on four bonus cuts -- he's not so incredible either. [5]

The Incredible Jimmy Smith: *Home Cookin'* (1959, Blue Note -04) Same old chitlins, cornbread and collard greens, but a rare guest appearance from r&b saxophonist Percy France (the "5" Royales, Bill Doggett) is as fine as sweet potato pie. [+]

Jimmy Smith: *Straight Life* (1961, Blue Note -07) A simple organ-guitar-drums trio, as restrained as anything he's ever done, which makes the eloquence of his phrasing on such a crude instrument all the more impressive. [8]

Jimmy Smith: *Plays Fats Waller* (1962, Blue Note -08) Trio with guitar and drums, but they add very little to Smith's organ, this time taking nearly everything slow, painting famous songs so thick with pastels they're only barely recognizable. [5]

Jimmy Smith: *Hobo Flats* (1963, Verve -08) Actually, another Oliver Nelson big band album, the horns subdued, setting up the organ player for his title role; still, it mostly works, partly because they stay close to the blues where everyone knows his place, mostly because Smith is player enough to keep in front of this parade. [7]

The Amazing Jimmy Smith Trio: *Live at the Village Gate* (1963, Verve -08) With guitarist Quentin Warren and drummer Billy Hart, four tracks running a short 30:23; Smith's intensity is keyed up, but his energy tends to compress the sound into a dense ball of blues riffs, with Warren providing little relief. [4]

Jimmy Smith: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1964, Verve -07) Cover shows Smith and a buxom model back-to-back, the latter with a wolf head, the sort of cornball literalism that reminds me of Johnny "Guitar" Watson (except that Watson would have exposed a lot more skin); a big band thing with Oliver Nelson and/or Claus Ogerman, crisply played, the band lighting a fire under Smith who scurries to keep the organ out front, most impressively on "Women of the World." [8]

Jimmy Smith: *Organ Grinder Swing* (1965, Verve) Featuring Kenny Burrell and Grady Tate. Produced by Creed Taylor. Mostly blues riffs, nice take on "Satin Doll." Nothing much wrong with it, but he did a lot of albums like this, many better. [5]

Jimmy Smith: *Retrospective* (1956-86, Blue Note -4CD -04) Smith raised the Hammond B-3 organ

from a toy to a serious jazz instrument. He pumped up the blues with the organ's churchy sound, then worked out boppish variations at a feverish pace. He was so fast, so versatile, that his records were often attributed to The Incredible Jimmy Smith. Something like Soul Jazz had long existed as an instrumental analog to r&b, but after Smith it morphed, its signature sound Smith's organ. Dozens of organists followed in his footsteps, but for his tenure with Blue Note from 1956 to 1963 he was the undisputed master. Early on he mostly played in trios with guitar and drums, often with Kenny Burrell or Grant Green. As time passed he worked more with horns, most comfortably with Stanley Turrentine -- *Back to the Chicken Shack* and *Prayer Meetin'* are definitive Soul Jazz albums. With only one cut after 1963, this just covers his formative period, but he never changed much -- his performance on Joey DeFrancesco's *Legacy* (Concord), cut shortly before his death, is every bit as true to form. [9]

Jimmy Smith: *The Very Best* (1956-86, Blue Note -05) Two trio pieces with guitar show how the organ master could pump up the excitement. Five with a saxophone show how he could duck and weave with another lead instrument. The latter three with Stanley Turrentine are more subtle than you'd expect from Mr. T, and more soulful than you'd expect from a guy whose first name was Incredible. [9]

Lonnie Liston Smith

Lonnie Liston Smith & the Cosmic Echoes: *Visions of a New World* (1975, Flying Dutchman/RCA) Smith's keyboards are rather dreamy but insubstantial. Donald Smith's vocals are a good deal more problematic: the first piece, "A Chance for Peace," at least has a message, and something of a beat; beyond that this wanders and warbles. Hard not to get dizzy amidst all the cosmic echoes. [4]

Mamie Smith

Crazy Blues: The Best of Mamie Smith (1920-31, Columbia/Legacy -04) Famous for having recorded the first blues but rarely in print, she's a sassy belter, fronts some hot jazz bands, and late in her career finally got the chance to sing some songs without "blues" in the title. [+]

Michael Smith

Michael Smith Quartet: *Live in Berlin: Austin Stream* (1976, FMP -77) A pianist from Kentucky, moved to France in 1972 and cut this and one more album before returning to the US in 1980; with Claude Bernard (alto sax), Kent Carter (bass), and Laurence Cook (drums); the saxophonist makes a strong impression, as do the piano leads. [7]

Stuff Smith

Stuff Smith: *Cat on a Hot Fiddle* (1959, Verve -04) The great swing fiddler on a mostly Gershwin program, backed by piano-bass-drums, nothing to it. [+]

Tab Smith

Tab Smith: *Crazy Walk* (1955-57, Delmark -04) In the Gospel According to Charlie Parker one finds lurking in the background the figure of an alto saxophonist completely unlike Bird, one who merely seeks to please the masses instead of answering the higher calling to create breathtakingly original art.

Tab Smith was, if not literally, at least in composite, the anti-Bird. While true jazz fans followed their pied piper into commercial limbo, saxophonists like Smith were reduced to being the butt of jokes. There were many such saxophonists in the '50s, most hopelessly obscure by now, and it's true that they can't keep a candle lit in the windstorm blown up by players like Parker. But they are the bedrock of '50s r&b, the missing links from Illinois Jacquet to Stanley Turrentine and Houston Person. It's also true that Tab Smith wasn't a hidden genius of the genre -- Hal Singer was more supple, and Joe Houston had a lot more honk. But this completes Delmark's mission of collecting Smith's 1951-57 work on four remarkably consistent and enjoyable discs. Parker pushed his horn to its limits; Smith just luxuriated in its spare warm tone, but that's something too. [+]

Tommy Smith

Tommy Smith: *Standards* (1991, Blue Note) Good intro to one of the finest tenor sax players of the '90s. [+]

Wadada Leo Smith

Wadada Leo Smith: *Kabell Years 1971-1979* (1971-79, Tzadik -4CD -04) From Albert Ayler to Pharoah Sanders to Peter Brötzmann, the avant-garde in the '60s was enthralled by the idea of pushing limits, of generating a louder and more discordant sound than ever before. They proved their point, leaving the next generation with a big problem: now what? Free jazz no longer a goal in the '70s; it was an assumption, but thus far its meaning could only be defined by what it was not. Into this void came the theoreticians -- the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, Leroy Jenkins. Smith came out of those same circles, working with Braxton and Jenkins as the Creative Construction Company, recording with Abrams and Marion Brown. During the '70s Smith's own work appeared on his Kabell Recods, his own label. Only now has a sizable chunk of it appeared on CD. Of the four CDs, two are solo works or trumpet and/or percussion, the other two small groups -- one with Oliver Lake on flute and sax, both with Anthony Davis on piano. The solo works are shot full of holes, silence being part of Smith's rhythmic arsenal. The groups are more expansive. Nothing here is particularly fun to play, but often it is fascinating to listen to. Smith's later records, even the solo *Red Sulphur Sky* (2001, Tzadik), have grown more lyrical, and he's added another dimension to his work with projects like Yo Miles! But this is one of the key documents of the gestation of what they could only call *creative music*. [+]

Leo Smith: *Human Rights* (1982-85, Kabell -09) From the avant trumpeter's pre-Wadada rastafari days, scattered pieces with Smith's vocals and horn over guitar, synth and/or mbira, backed with a world music oddity mixing koto with Peter Kowald and Günter Sommer; parts of this could break pop, but no point getting too comfortable. [6]

Wadada Leo Smith: *Tao-Njia* (1993, Tzadik) Smith's trumpet cuts like a bright beacon through the stillness of the night, but these long ambling pieces are long on night, and little is ever illuminated. The drums are of interest: frame drums, timpani, others. The strings less so, the poetry less than that. [5]

Warren Smith

Warren Smith: *Dragon Dave Meets Prince Black Knight From the Darkside of the Moon* (1988,

Porter -11) History has taken the cold war fantasies and turned them back into comic book juvenilia, but if you have a penchant for banging and blowing, not to mention the leader's stealth marimba, you can overlook (or occasionally laugh at) the vocal collage; originally released as a cassette no one would hear, but now you can. [6]

Willie "The Lion" Smith

Willie "The Lion" Smith & Don Ewell: *Stride Piano Duets: Live in Toronto, 1966* (1966, Delmark -08) The old stride piano master, reinforced by one of his finest students; The Lion can't sing, but he only tries twice, and he's such a charming rogue you don't mind, especially when the keys tinkle so sprightly. [7]

Lew Soloff

Lew Soloff: *Little Wing* (1991, Sweet Basil) Soloff is a trumpeter who does a lot of sideman work, especially with big bands where his high clear tone is especially welcome. He dates back to Blood, Sweat & Tears -- a pretty good group of jazz musicians worked there, regardless of what you think of the overall concept. He has half-a-dozen albums under his own name, of which this is the only one I've heard. And it's a lively one, with a little extra percussion for those funky latino things, and Ray Anderson's mighty trombone stirring up the alligators. The title cut is the Hendrix song -- Soloff was a regular with Gil Evans, and appeared on Evans' Hendrix album. [+]

Günter Sommer

Günter Sommer: *Hörmusik* (1979, FMP -80) German drummer, a significant figure in the avant-garde, tries his hand at a solo album -- not all drums, but everything that doesn't go bang at least flutters and twitters; one piece, 34:49, originally split over two LP sides, now pasted back together. [6]

Glenn Spearman

Glenn Spearman Double Trio: *Smokehouse* (1993, Black Saint -94) Two drummers, two saxes, one piano, one bass -- not a symmetrical double trio, but not exactly a sextet either. Solid avant fare, doesn't explode, but lots to listen to. [+]

Glenn Spearman: *Blues for Falasha* (1998, Tzadik -99) This album opens with a tremendous blast of deep sound, and in a sense it unveils itself in the echo of that blast. The unveiling is slow. The group has two drummers, who dominate long stretches; with bassist Lisle Ellis adding to the bottom, this sometimes feels like a percussionist's record. Chris Brown plays piano -- infrequently, tinkling up and down the scales, nothing special. The saxophone work, from Larry Ochs as well as Spearman, is generally subdued -- in an avant-jazz mode, for sure, but not especially aggressive. This was cut shortly before Spearman's death, and has a feel that is meditative and ruminative, but it also feels unpolished and not quite finished. [5]

Heiner Stadler

Heiner Stadler: *Brains on Fire* (1966-74, P&C Labor -2CD -12) German pianist, moved to New York

in 1965, hooking into the avant jazz scene, winding up with the original release of this album in 1973 (three cuts), followed by a second volume (three more cuts) in 1974. This drops one track from the second volume ("Pointed") and adds three previously unreleased pieces, one a blowout with the Big Band of the North German Radio Station (including Manfred Schoof, Gerd Dudek, Albert Mangelsdorff, and Wolfgang Dauner). The rest are small groups, mostly with Jimmy Owens on trumpet and Tyrone Washington or Joe Farrell on tenor sax; the exception is a bass-vocal duet, Reggie Workman in fine form, but Dee Dee Bridgewater is barely audible. [7]

Tomasz Stanko

Tomasz Stanko: *From the Green Hill* (1998, ECM) Too atmospheric, perhaps. It takes a while to sort out the textures, and it takes patience to just let it envelop you, but there is a payoff in the end. The textures themselves are mostly the work of Dino Saluzzi's bandoneon, which John Surman elaborates and Stanko embellishes. [+]

Tomasz Stanko: *Rarum XVII: Selected Recordings* (1975-98, ECM -04) One of the great trumpet players of our era comes from Poland. Back in the bad old days of Communism he cut his teeth working with Roman Polanski's favorite composer, Krzysztof Komeda; even before the Cold War melted, he could slip into the free world, perhaps because his jazz was already free. His ECM records run slower, darker, more atmospheric than the records he recorded in Poland, but that's par for the course with ECM. The sampler, like the rest of the *Rarum* series, jumps around, losing the continuity of masterpieces like *Leosia* and *Litania*, in order to bring in a wider range of experiences. One thing to look out for is the contrast in the drummers, especially between Tony Oxley (a dazzlingly swift improviser with a light touch) and Edward Vesala (a guy who plays heavy and moves the world with him). [9]

Bobo Stenson

Bobo Stenson Trio: *Serenity* (1999, ECM -2CD -00) Another background disc, or two in this case -- the total doesn't run a lot over 80 minutes, but they decided not to cut it. As noted too often, I've never got the hang of describing piano trios -- what I like, what I don't, and why, but I know one when I hear one, and this one works. Calm, deliberately paced, subtle, refined, stately. None of those attributes can be depended on, but they all work here. One common denominator in all the better piano trio albums is that the bass and drums hold up their ends equally. Anders Jormin is often fascinating here. Jon Christensen, of course, is a given. By the way, Stenson was the leader on my all-time favorite Jan Garbarek album, *Witchi-Tai-To*. The leader of a close second in the Garbarek sweepstakes was Keith Jarrett, as frantic as Stenson is calm. [9]

Michael Jefry Stevens

B. 1951, New York.

Michael Jefry Stevens Quartet: *For the Children* (1995, Cadence Jazz -08) Pianist. Moved to Florida at age 8, back to New York at 20, to Memphis some time after 1995. Discography gets going around 1990 with groups led by Mark Whitecage and Dave Douglas (The Mosaic Sextet). Not sure how many -- his steadiest gig has been the Fonda/Stevens Group, which gets filed under bassist Joe Fonda. This is

part of "The Cadence Historical Series": previously unreleased tapes of some historical significance. The quartet is fronted by saxophonist David Schnitter, with Dominic Duval (bass) and Jay Rosen (drums). The pieces are a mix of avant and familiar, including blues and a waltz. Stevens slips in and out without leaving a firm impression. Sound is less than perfect. [7]

Michael Jefry Stevens Trio: *For Andrew* (1996, Konnex -08) An old tape of cerebral piano, dusted off and dressed up as a tribute to Andrew Hill, who no doubt would be pleased, while most of us wonder just what the connection is. [8]

Bill Stewart

Bill Stewart: *Telepathy* (1996, Blue Note -97) This is a drummer's record, and as usual it pays to concentrate there, but with piano (Bill Carrothers), bass (Larry Grenadier), and two saxophones (Steve Wilson and Seamus Blake) there's much more going on. Maybe too much. There's no doubt that Stewart knows his craft -- I recall a "blindfold test" where he nailed every drummer thrown out at him. I'm impressed by the details. All of the players are first rate, and they have plenty to do. But I'm less clear on where it's all meant to go. Maybe nowhere. [+]

Rex Stewart

Rex Stewart: *Rendezvous With Rex* (1958, Felsted) Ellington's trumpet star 1931-45, left to tour with JATP and run his own big band but never had much success; mostly octet: lush reeds and tasty guitar to bounce his cornet off of, picking up a bit on the one he sings ("My Kind of Gal") and ending with the lovely "Blue Echo." [7]

Sonny Stitt

A contemporary of Charlie Parker, with ideas so similar he was often accused of copying, but he lasted much longer and recorded extensively, often playing tenor instead of alto sax, often engaging in blistering cutting contests.

Sonny Stitt: *Now!* (1963, Impulse) A very typical Stitt quartet with the impeccable Hank Jones on piano, Al Lucas on bass, and Osie Johnson on drums, never rushed or frenetic but solid all around. [6]

Sonny Stitt/Paul Gonsalves: *Salt and Pepper* (1963, Impulse -97) With Jones and Johnson again, Milt Hinton taking over bass, and Duke Ellington's tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves sitting in; Stitt is more deferential than usual, making this a session to savor his underrecorded guest. [9]

Sonny Stitt: *It's Magic* (1969, Delmark -05) Like many of his 300+ albums, this trio with Hammond B3 ace Don Patterson is a quick confection of standards and vamps, but for all the times he's been accused of sounding like Charlie Parker, this time he sounds more like Johnny Hodges. [9]

Markus Stockhausen

Markus Stockhausen: *Possible Worlds* (1993-95, CMP) This is annoyingly quiet, meant to make you come to it. The payoffs are slight, but there are some. This is considered to be jazz, most likely because the leader plays trumpet, but it fits in closer with his more famous father's work -- little blips and

noodles, mostly discrete. In other words, no flow, not a lot of interaction, just some interesting sounds on a spare tableau. [4]

Billy Strayhorn

Billy Strayhorn: *Cue for Saxophone* (1959, Felsted) The saxophonist here, originally credited as Cue Porter, was Johnny Hodges, in one of the world's easiest blindfold tests; he's surrounded by regulars Shorty Baker, Quentin Jackson, and Russell Procope, with the leader on piano on one of the first of his few albums; Hodges is as sublime as ever. [9]

Frank Strozier

Frank Strozier: *Cool, Calm and Collected* (1960, Vee-Jay -93) Alto saxophonist working briskly in an expansive post-bop mode. Billy Wallace plays piano. Don't recognize the bass and drums. [+]

Frank Strozier Sextet: *Remember Me* (1976, Steeplechase -94) Strozier plays alto sax and flute. He is joined here by Danny Moore (flugelhorn), Howard Johnson (tuba), Harold Mabern (piano), Lisle Atkinson (bass), and Michael Carvin (drums). Good, sharp but smooth flowing session, with smart players all around, but almost a little too easy. Produced by Nils Winther. Not real long at 44:17. I've played it a number of times, always enjoying it, never knocked out. Ergo: [+]

Dave Stryker

Dave Stryker Quartet: *Blue Degrees* (1992, Steeplechase) Another tenor/organ record, pretty good one in fact with Goldings on organ and the always-impressive Rick Margitza on tenor. Stryker strums along. [+]

Dick Sudhalter

Dick Sudhalter & His London Friends: *After Awhile* (1994, Challenge) Cornet player (trumpet here), founded the Classic Jazz Quartet, wrote biographies of Bix Beiderbecke and Hoagy Carmichael plus a book called *Lost Chords* complaining about how white jazz musicians (1915-45) were underappreciated; his long list of London friends are trad jazzers, rotating through here in small groups which do a fine job of spotlighting the trumpet. [7]

Juma Sultan

Juma Sultan's Aboriginal Music Society: *Whispers From the Archive* (1970-78, Porter -12) Originally from California, Sultan played percussion with Jimi Hendrix, joined Archie Shepp on records like *Attica Blues*, eventually became a Christian minister. This is the second slice from his archives, following *Father of Origin* in 2011 (on Eremite, unheard by me). These pieces are scattered over the years, the only constant Ali Abuwi (oboe, flute, percussion), although one 19:20 track doesn't credit either. This kicks off with a 20:45 piece called "AMS," with Sultan on bass, Abuwi on oboe, and everyone but the guitarist on percussion -- James "Blood" Ulmer is too busy stealing the show. That's followed by 1:27 of "Shake Your Money Maker," the first of several vocals that bind the extended groove pieces to a sense of community. Last two pieces break out the flutes, and for once I don't mind.

[9]

Sun Ra

Sun Ra: *Sun Song* (1956, Delmark -90) Evidently this was Sun Ra's first album. Not sure who all the musicians are, but the booklet includes pictures of John Gilmore and Julian Priester. The music here seems mostly rooted in big band swing, but it already he was already on a distinct tangent. While the band voicings came out of the big band era, and Ra's piano had a bit of stride in it, both were slightly off in unprecedented ways. Whereas Gillespie and Parker pushed big band swing into the modern age by fetishizing the soloists, making the band just a platform for high speed improvisation, Ra gets a similar modernist effect by pushing the group ever further out. Pioneering music here, a bit crude and haphazard, but on its way. [9]

Sun Ra: *Interplanetary Melodies: Doo Wop From Saturn and Beyond, Vol. One* (1950s, Norton -09) A few doo wop singles from the 1950s, including a Christmas chant anyone could have improved on; a groove track called "Africa" that showed up on a 1966 album, a bunch of previously unissued material, including a fractured "Summertime"; a bit of spoken word -- stuff that kicks back and forth between quirky and too trivial to bother with. [5]

Sun Ra: *The Second Stop Is Jupiter: Doo Wop From Saturn and Beyond, Vol. Two* (1950s, Norton -09) More odds than sods, as they mix a couple more known singles with a lot of tape scraps, all with vocals, though most unreleased for good reasons -- not that he ever did anything completely uninteresting. [4]

Sun Ra: *Sound Sun Pleasure* (1953-60, Evidence -91) The second half here comes from Sun Ra's earliest (1953-55) recordings, collected and released on the LP *Deep Purple* in 1973. The first half was issued under the present title from recordings made in 1958-60. The music is typical of Ra's early period -- big band swing with its consciousness raised to some far corner of the universe. "Enlightenment," with its astonishing Cuban trumpet crescendo, is reprised from *Jazz in Silhouette*, probably the best thing Ra did in the period (or maybe ever). The opening "'Round Midnight" is better than most, but Monk's most famous song always leaves me wondering what people hear in it. While the music here is superb, the vocals (Hatty Randolph, Clyde Williams) are barely amateur (especially Randolph) -- they're tolerable only because they're so corny. [+]

Sun Ra: *Spaceship Lullaby* (1954-60, Atavistic -04) home-recorded rehearsal tapes of bad vocal groups backed by little more than Ra's piano; as weird as you'd figure, but not as weird as you might hope. [4]

Sun Ra and His Solar Arkestra: *Visits Planet Earth/Interstellar Low Ways* (1956-60, Evidence -92) First half from 1956-58, second from 1960. The big band music is similar to other efforts from this period, although the space concepts are more prominent here, including a couple of chant-based vocals to drive the point home (or into the ground). [+]

Sun Ra: *The Futuristic Sounds of Sun Ra* (1961, Savoy -62) The Arkestra lands in New York, if not from Saturn at least from Chicago, and they celebrate with a little bit of everything they do, including an odd vocal, flute solos, boogie piano, and percussion all over the place -- nothing electronic squiggles if that's what you expect by futuristic, but still way ahead of the times. [9]

Sun Ra & His Solar Arkestra: *Secrets of the Sun* (1962, Atavistic -09) Recorded shortly after Ra and

his Arkestra landed in New York, feels rough and scattered, with shifting lineups, even the regulars rotating instruments -- John Gilmore variously plays tenor sax, bass clarinet, and percussion, his credits also including space drums and space bird sounds -- while Ra's piano lurches hither and yon. [7]

Sun Ra: *Heliocentric Worlds: Volumes 1 and 2* (1965, ESP-Disk -05) Two LPs recorded seven months apart, still they fit together; both are large groups working complex sonic terrain, the first half bursting with tympani, both awash in percussion and an exotic range of instruments; still, not much swing, or even momentum. [8]

Sun Ra: *Heliocentric Worlds Vol. 3: The Lost Tapes* (1965, ESP-Disk -05) An extra, previously unreleased 35:47 from the Nov. 16 session that produced *Vol. 2*; while the pieces are new, not much else is: they start with horn a blaring, and everyone doubles on percussion, but there is some redeeming piano for the hard core. [5]

Sun Ra: *Nothing Is . . .* (1966, ESP-Disk -05) More space shtick, including some chant-like vocals that are neither here nor there; one piece that stands out is "Exotic Forest," with a lot of percussion in the bush and high-pitched horns popping out of the canopy; the bonus cuts include one that swings, and another that travels the spaceways. [7]

Sun Ra & His Astro-Infinity Arkestra: *Strange Strings* (1966-67, Atavistic -09) You can't help but do a double take when the man from Saturn finds anything strange. The string instruments played by nearly everyone in the band -- rotating with their more/less normal instruments, although Marshall Allen's first credit is oboe, and the rhythm section mostly consists of log drums and tympani -- are unidentified but seem to include odd lutes and zithers from around the world. Seem, because they're pretty much unidentifiable: undulating waves of metallic bowed and plucked sounds crashing against the shore. The pieces move from "Worlds Approaching" to "Strings Strange" to "Strange Strange": the first is remarkable, especially for the drums, while the later pieces unravel a bit. One of Ra's many self-issued low-run LPs, augmented with a bonus track called "Door Squeak" -- an improv based on Ra repeatedly opening and closing a squeaky door. [8]

Sun Ra: *Outer Spaceways Incorporated* (1968, Black Lion -93) Adds one song to the five released in 1971 as *Pictures of Infinity*; at first this sounds like John Gilmore trying to jump Albert Ayler, then the drummer gets some, someone quasi-sings; finally they swing into orbit, and let the flute float in space. [7]

Sun-Ra and His Astro-Infinity Arkestra: *Atlantis* (1967-69, Evidence -93) No guitar is credited, so it must be Ra's Hohner Clavinet that eeks out a first track that sounds like something Derek Bailey ought to have done. The second track is more of the same, the guitar suggestion less pronounced, with slight percussion and some John Gilmore comping along with the oddball rhythm. This is all interesting enough, except for the long title cut, where Ra switches to "Solar Sound Organ (Gibson Kalamazoo organ)" and things get ugly. The piece threatens to turn into one of those endless mind-numbing space extravaganzas that Pink Floyd fell back into during their rudderless post-Barrett period. It's better than that, and also (if this matters) was done half-a-decade earlier. [5]

Sun Ra: *The Night of the Purple Moon* (1964-70, Atavistic -07) Stripped down to a quartet, with electric bass underscoring Ra's goofball electric keyboards -- one's called the rocksichord -- and two saxophonists who have to provide percussion on the side; supplemented by 1964 solos on wurlitzer and celeste. [8]

Sun Ra & His Solar-Myth Arkestra: *The Solar-Myth Approach, Vol. 1 & 2* (1970-71, Fuel 2000 -2CD -01) Typical, I think -- widely scattered riffs and effects, often quite remarkable, few that could be anticipated. [+]

Sun Ra: *Nidhamu/Dark Myth Equation Visitation* (1971, Art Yard -09) A series of impromptu concerts from a visit to Egypt, with Ra on his Moog and the band on instruments borrowed from the army; some solo keyb, some pieces with drums and backing vocals, a lot of odd constructions, nothing likely to blow you away, but plenty to think about. [6]

Sun Ra: *Greatest Hits: Easy Listening for Intergalactic Travel* (1956-73, Evidence -00) The title, of course, is a joke -- maybe several jokes. Although Ra cut a couple dozen singles, and even more albums, most were released in editions of 500 or so, and were sold mostly by the band at concerts. It's likely that no one has ever recorded more while staying further away from a hit. Nor was this really a problem with distribution: while most of this music is very listenable, none of it hooks like a hit. Still, this is a fairly painless introduction to one of the geniuses of modern jazz. And with 18 pieces, the longest at 7:10 and most in the 3-4 minute range, it moves along quite nicely. [9]

Sun Ra: *The Antique Blacks* (1974, Art Yard -09) A small group live shot that wound up on Saturn in 1978 and languished in extreme obscurity, distinguished by lots of quirky rockish synth and tuneless vocals with occasional honks and screeches from the horns; by normal people this would be desperate but, of course, there's nothing normal about it. [7]

Sun Ra: *Pathways to Unknown Worlds/Friendly Love* (1973-75, Evidence -00) Reissue combines a couple of those strange, noodling albums that Sun Ra occasionally indulged in. Too amelic to be atmospheric, too arhythmic to be enchanting, nonetheless nowhere near unlistenable, nor even especially difficult. I'm half tempted to rate it higher, but not inspired enough to sort out its pecking order amidst all the other strange, noodling albums he churned out (or even the smattering that I happen to have). [5]

Sun Ra: *Some Blues but Not the Kind That's Blue* (1973-77, Atavistic -07) Two "small group" sessions -- 10 musicians is a bit below Arkestra weight, but not much -- that fell through the cracks and wound up in Atavistic's remarkable Unheard Music Series. Mostly covers, familiar songs like "My Favorite Things" and "Black Magic" shot into unforeseen orbits. The horns cut the grease, but the piano (or organ on the 1973 tracks) dominates: Ra's mix of stride, bebop, and something from the outer reaches of the galaxy is pretty amazing. [9]

Sun Ra: *Languidity* (1978, Evidence -00) Typical bubbling gumbo. [+]

Sun Ra: *Disco 3000: Complete Milan Concert 1978* (1978, Art Yard -2CD -11) Originally credited to Sun Ra and His Myth Science Arkestra with four cuts on an El Saturn LP, expanded here to nearly three times the runtime. Credits are sparse, but Ra's unique take on electric piano sets up a blocky rhythm that occasionally breaks loose but is regular enough to drive the horns forth -- brilliant trumpet (presumably Marshall Allen) and rousing tenor sax (John Gilmore, natch). And when Ra switches to acoustic piano, his boogie jones comes out. No recognizable disco beats here, but Ra's projecting way into the future. [9]

Sun Ra: *The Sun Ra Arkestra Meets Salah Ragab in Egypt* (1971-84, Leo -99) Three 1983-84 tracks by the Arkestra with the Egyptian percussionist, long on drum solo, plus four earlier tracks by Ragab, the Cairo Jazz Band, and/or the Cairo Free Jazz Ensemble; the latter half turns out to be much the more

interesting one, in a similar vein. [7]

The Sun Ra Arkestra: *Live at Praxis '84* (1984, Leo -2CD -00) Originally released on three LPs, it's hard to imagine any of the six sides being truly compelling, but over 111:35 the kitsch mounts up -- the chants early on, the Fletcher Henderson tunes, "Cocktails for Two," "Satin Doll," "Days of Wine and Roses," a scabrous "Mack the Knife," and no shortage of space riffs, not to mention spacey vamps. [8]

Sun Ra & His Intergalactic Arkestra: *Second Star to the Right (Salute to Walt Disney)* (1989, Leo -95) A surprise contributor to Hal Willner's *Stay Awake: Various Interpretations of Music From Vintage Disney Films*, Ra couldn't help but fill out a whole album, his group vocals cutting all the saccharine out of songs like "Zip a Dee Doo Dah" and "Whistle While You Work" while kicking the horns up a notch and swinging like hell. [8]

Sun Ra & His Cosmo Discipline Arkestra: *A Night in East Berlin/My Brothers the Wind & Sun No. 9* (1986-90, Leo -95) Live, originally two LPs, the seven tracks from Berlin long on space grunge, the 20:49 finale of uncertain providence (1988 or 1990), but with Ahmed Abdullah and Billy Bang joining in. [6]

Sun Ra and the Year 2000 Myth Science Arkestra: *Live at the Hackney Empire* (1990, Leo -2CD -94) Rather late in the day -- the leader was past 75, only a couple more years to live -- but the long vamp pieces drive home the band's relentless search, and the vocal bits, the toy piano, the interpolated covers, the occasional squeals, all reiterate the oddness and whimsy at the heart of the leader's vision -- if you want to talk about a band taking "a long, strange trip" none other rivals the Arkestra. [8]

John Surman

John Surman: *Flashpoint: NDR Workshop - April '69* (1969, Cuneiform -11) The middle of a very rich period for the 25-year-old soprano/baritone saxophonist, coming out of Mike Westbrook's group, leading The Trio (with Barre Phillips and Stu Martin), his first album under his own name just out and his big band *Tales of the Algonquin* in the near future, and (this and) other projects falling through the cracks. His NDR workshop assembled four reeds (Surman, Alan Skidmore on tenor sax and flute, Ronnie Scott on tenor sax, Mike Osborne on alto sax), Kenny Wheeler (trumpet, flugelhorn), two trombones (Malcolm Griffiths and Eric Kleinschuefer), piano (Fritz Pauer), bass (Harry Miller), and drums (Alan Jackson). Five pieces: the two featuring Surman's soprano are irresistible vamps, as is the closer after they get past their everyone-raise-hell patch at the beginning. The slower pieces have more trouble gaining traction, although there are crackling solos here and there. [8]

John Surman: *Way Back When* (1969, Cuneiform -05) One wonders whether the title existed when this session was recorded, or merely tacked on when it was rediscovered a third of a century later. Looking at the booklet photo of Surman it's hard to imagine that anyone that young had such a concept. With his Beatle haircut, Sgt. Pepper mustache, and paisley shirt he could hardly have been thinking more than 3-4 years back, if that. On the other hand, he was even then a near legend for his work with Mike Westbrook and John McLaughlin, and next up was a group with Barre Phillips and Stu Martin brash enough to call themselves The Trio. This set was built around Brian Odgers' electric bass and John Taylor's electric piano, a steady pulse that owes more to soul jazz than fusion, but it sets a firm foundation for Surman to work many variations on a little figure. Surman was especially distinctive on soprano sax, giving the instrument a firmness that one expects only from heavier horns, such as his light and dexterous baritone sax. Mike Osborne joins on alto for the last two pieces. [9]

The Trio (1970, BGO -2CD -94) This group consisted of John Surman (baritone and soprano sax, bass clarinet), Barre Phillips (bass), and Stu Martin (drums). Anyone only familiar with Surman's ECM recordings will be in for a surprise here: Surman's playing is free and daring here, while Phillips and Martin chart their own courses. This all comes out of the '60s avant-garde, but the playing is so vigorous, and the chemistry so explosive that this rises well above the norm on energy alone. Not that it is all energy. Every time I play it I'm more impressed with details -- a bass solo, a little baritone solo with occasional plucked tones and tinkles. This may just turn out to be one of the masterpieces of the era. But at the very least: [9]

John Surman/John Warren: *Tales of the Algonquin* (1971, Vocalion -05) Surman's early work -- under his own name, in a group called the Trio, and as a sideman with John McLaughlin, Mike Westbrook and others -- is remarkably diverse and adventurous, the work of an immensely talented young multi-reedist at a point when history when jazz in England made a sudden leap from trad to avant with scarcely a glance at bebop orthodoxy. But what makes this album unique is its size and sweep: the big band features six brass, five reeds, piano, two basses, two sets of drums. The brass is tightly arranged by Warren, mostly for color and power, while the reeds shoot the stars with an explosive series of solos. The combination marks an interesting midpoint between latter-day swing bands like Basie and Kenton, with their crack discipline, and the emerging free orchestras like Globe Unity. As such, it is a direction that few of these people explored further, making it all the more interesting as a period curio. [9]

S.O.S. [John Surman/Mike Osborne/Alan Skidmore]: *Looking for the Next One* (1974-75, Cuneiform -2CD -13) Three saxophonists who got started in the British avant-garde of the late 1960s, playing as a sax trio with no other instruments -- just tiny bits of keyb or percussion on the rare occasions when one puts down a horn; they cut one album together, for Ogun in 1975, and this trawl through the archives adds more than twice as much material. The sound palette is rather narrow, as is inevitable with sax choirs, but they do lively it up. [8]

John Surman: *Road to Saint Ives* (1990, ECM) This one was done with Surman overdubbing his own synth tracks. The latter tend to be string-like backdrops, minimalist sheets of sound rather than beats, and he moves cautiously over them, creating a thoughtful, almost meditative tableau. [+]

John Surman: *Coruscating* (1999, ECM -00) In effect, all this does vs. most of Surman's other ECM recordings is to use a bass + string quartet as the sonic backdrop for his reeds -- soprano and baritone sax, bass and contrabass clarinet. The strings are quietly pretty but mostly just there as the backdrop for his improvs, which are tasteful as usual. Lovely album. Of course, he does it all the time. [+]

John Surman: *Rarum XIII: Selected Recordings* (1976-99, ECM -04) A prime example of ECM's taming of the avant-garde, the earliest piece here the most robust, the latest the most genteel, in between almost clinical exercises on his three main reeds, often dubbed over his own minimalist synths. [+]

Ralph Sutton

Ralph Sutton and Dick Cary: *Rendezvous at Sunnie's 1969* (1969, Arbors -05) Sutton was the postwar era's nonpareil stride pianist, so he offers little here that hasn't already been demonstrated many times. So focus on Cary, who cut his teeth on piano with Louis Armstrong and trumpet with Eddie Condon. Here he sticks to trumpet and alto horn -- looks like a miniature tuba -- adding a wizened,

soulful voice to Sutton's flashy little trio. [9]

Gabor Szabo

Hungarian guitarist, left the country on the eve of the 1956 uprising and made his way to Berklee. First record peddled his folk jazz as gypsy music, then he quickly picked up some Indian affects for his *Jazz Raga* album.

Gabor Szabo: *Gypsy '66* (1965, Impulse -66) The Hungarian guitarist's debut album, you can imagine the machinations -- why not do a gypsy guitar album, like Django but, you know, more modern, like with today's pop hits (you know, Lennon-McCartney, Bacharach-David), and hey, why not let Gary McFarland arrange and, like, play his marimba, and say, we can work Sadao Watanabe's flute in there somewhere? -- the word you're looking for it kitsch; the album would have been much better had Szabo stretched his original "Gypsy Jam" to 35 minutes and lost the rest. [4]

Gabor Szabo: *Spellbinder* (1966, Impulse -05) A jazz guitarist from Hungary, offers clean metallic picking over the latin beats of Willie Bobo and Victor Pantoja, with Ron Carter and Chico Hamilton steadying the light swing; his deadpan "Bang Bang" vocal works as a novelty. [7]

Gabor Szabo: *Jazz Raga* (1966, Light in the Attic -10) Hungarian guitarist, plied every angle he could think of to break in including this Indian nod, with titles like "Krishna," "Ravi" (for Shankar), and "Raga Doll." He gets a lot of twang and a heavy whiff of late-'60s incense from his overdubbed sitar, especially on covers that help date it: "Caravan," "Summertime," and (thanks to Brian Jones) "Paint It Black." Reissued with old artwork and one of the best (and at 36 pages largest) booklets I've seen in recent reissues -- the label thinks this amusing period piece is a gem. [7]

Gabor Szabo: *The Sorcerer* (1967, Impulse) Recorded live at the Jazz Workshop in Boston, with second guitarist Jimmy Stewart as well as bass, drums, and percussion -- mostly small bells suggesting Indian roots for their tight improvisations. [8]

Gabor Szabo: *More Sorcery* (1967, Impulse) Same group, three extra tracks from the same April gig plus three more from their show at Monterey Jazz Festival that September -- less distinctive, although they do step adroitly through a couple of covers that could have been traps. [7]

Lew Tabackin

The Lew Tabackin Quartet: *I'll Be Seeing You* (1992, Concord) Obviously, I like his tenor sax better than his flute -- I always like tenor sax better than flute -- but he gets more mileage than most out of the flute. For one thing, with no other horns he uses it to lead rather than for filligree. On the other hand, what is the fascination? Benny Green, Peter Washington, and Lewis Nash make for a superb rhythm section, and Tabackin's tenor has wonderful range and personality. His take on "Isfahan" makes you wonder why it isn't done more often, and he closes with a rousing "In Walked Bud." [9]

Horace Tapscott

Horace Tapscott: *Dissent or Descent* (1984, Nimbus West -98) Piano trio with Fred Hopkins and Ben Riley. Not the fastest or finest work I've heard from Tapscott, but it retains interest most of the way through. Hopkins and Riley are near the top of their game and get plenty of room. [+]

Buddy Tate

Buddy Tate: *Swinging Like . . . Tate* (1958, Felsted) One of the famed "Texas Tenors," Tate joined Count Basie's band from 1939-48; he held a long (1953-74) residency at the Celebrity Club in Harlem, and starting with this album recorded dozens of examples of his ability to swing a blues -- my favorite is a 1961 date with Buck Clayton, *Buck and Buddy Swing the Blues*; a little unsteady on the first side, but then Clayton, Dicky Wells, and Jo Jones reunite for the second, really perking up the saxophonist. [7]

Buddy Tate with Humphrey Lyttelton: *Swinging Scorpio* (1974, Black Lion -03) One of the legendary Texas tenors, always at home on a blues with a swing rhythm, and England's premier trad jazz trumpeter; probably would have been better had they excluded the extra horns, which encouraged them to slide into an easy groove and stay there. [7]

Art Tatum

Art Tatum: *The Best of the Complete Solo Masterpieces* (1953-55, Pablo -03) Selected from the 8 separate CDs, or the 7-CD box, it's impossible to know whether these really are the best, but at least it's nice that someone took the effort to sort them out. Tatum solo is a marvel to behold, although it's not something I'm so taken with that I might feel like wading through eight hours of it. In some ways, I suspect that they went as much for well known songs as for the performances. But then, who's to second guess the performances? I'm going to take this on faith as all the solo Tatum I really need. And treasure it accordingly. [10]

Art Tatum: *The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 3* (1955, Pablo) With Lionel Hampton and Buddy Rich. The first few cuts here start off with Hampton and Tatum at the races -- Hamp has the faster horse, but Tatum's the supreme jockey. Rich just keeps score, although he does get to lead a bit on "How High the Moon." This whole session didn't fit on one CD, so it's continued on Vol. 4. [9]

Art Tatum: *The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 4* (1955, Pablo) With Lionel Hampton and Buddy Rich. Starts with "This Can't Be Love" -- not quite as fast as the start on its predecessor, but perky enough. The following cuts, though, do slow down quite a bit, with "Lover Man" particularly lovely. But this tends to lighten out over the long haul. [+]

Art Tatum: *The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 5* (1955, Pablo) With Harry "Sweets" Edison, Lionel Hampton, Barney Kessel, Red Callender, and Buddy Rich. This session seems a little on the busy side, although it's hard to fault Sweets on anything he does here -- he's all aces. So I guess that means Hampton and Kessel are the spare wheels, even though they both do nice work in turn. The net effect is that Tatum doesn't get much space. [+]

Art Tatum: *The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 6* (1956, Pablo) With Red Callender and Jo Jones. This starts with 7:10 of "Just One of Those Things" -- a pure Tatum showcase. "More Than You Know" is even better: he plays so many notes for each one of Callender's that the whole surface shimmers. "If" is taken rather leisurely, but with trademark fillips and filligree. The rest is less eventful, but showcases a lot of fancy tinkling. [9]

Art Tatum: *The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 7* (1956, Pablo) With Buddy DeFranco, Red Callender and Bill Douglass. DeFranco's clarinet is just right for this session -- beautiful tone, effortless swing. His simplicity complements Tatum's fleetness. Delightful set. [10]

Art Tatum: *The Complete Pablo Group Masterpieces* (1954-56, Pablo -6CD) These were originally released in eight volumes -- three of which I own and have dealt with before. (Volume 8, with Ben Webster, is the prize of what I've heard.) I was thinking that having the "Complete" series I'd be able to deal with the missing volumes as well, but that's going to take some jiggering, since the previous eight discs have been squeezed down to six here. (Big LP-sized box, with two double-wide jewel cases with three CDs in each, plus an LP-format booklet.) The session with Webster is extraordinary, a simply lovely meeting. The DeFranco is a very close runner-up, with the Roy Eldridge and Benny Carter sessions close behind. Tatum always preferred to play on his own, which may be why the trio seems to showcase his most vibrant piano, but the real value of these sessions is that they show that he can play in group contexts, and modulate his playing accordingly. The net effect is, I think, much easier to grapple with than his solo work, which like all solo piano sounds thin even though he gussies it up so extraordinarily. None of this should be taken as disparaging Hampton, who does fine work here. It just seems that the horns are better able to keep up with Tatum. [9]

Art Tatum: *The Best of the Complete Group Masterpieces* (1954-56, Pablo -03) Tatum's group recordings are a lot easier to sort out, and the best-of suffers a bit from variability -- not so much quality as just the fact that the individual discs hold together so brilliantly. Still, for the casual fan it's hard to go wrong here. The work with Webster and DeFranco (and Carter and Eldridge) comes from CDs worth owning whole. Same for the Red Callendar/Jo Jones trio, which provides some brilliant pianistics here. The other sessions with Lionel Hampton are less valuable on their own, but in limited doses liven things up here. [10]

Art Taylor

Art Taylor: *A.T.'s Delight* (1960, Blue Note -07) Hard bop drummer, with veteran bebopper Dave Burns on trumpet and a young saxophonist who turned out to be Stanley Turrentine, and a shmear of Patato to expand upon the rhythm. [7]

Cecil Taylor

Cecil Taylor: *Student Studies* (1966, Fuel 2000 -03) Scott Yanow calls this one of Taylor's most accessible, and he's right: it's a nicely balanced quartet with alto saxist Jimmy Lyons framing the pieces and helpful contributions from Alan Silva and Andrew Cyrille, with Taylor's atonal piano locked in a politely conventional framework; on the other hand, Taylor's most exciting records come when he breaks out and smashes up the place. [+]

Cecil Taylor: *Fondation Maeght Nights (Vol. 1)* (1969, Jazz View) Parts of this concert were previously released as *Nuits de la Fondation Maeght* and *The Great Concert of Cecil Taylor*. In this current set of "historical masters" (don't know when they were reissued) there are three volumes. This one has one 40:23 piece. The group: Taylor, Jimmy Lyons (alto sax), Sam Rivers (tenor/soprano sax), Andrew Cyrille (drums; name misspelled as "Cirille" on cover). Sound seems rather attenuated. Otherwise this seems rather typical of this group in this period. [5]

Cecil Taylor Unit: *Spring of Two Blue J's* (1973, Jazz View) Two takes of the title piece. The first runs 16:19, and is Taylor solo. The second runs 21:29, and is done by the quartet -- Jimmy Lyons (alto sax), Sirone (bass), Andrew Cyrille (drums, again misspelled "Cirille"). One good thing about this doubling up is that it helps illuminate Taylor's always difficult music. Still, after playing this I went

back to *Unit Structures*, which I had long ago dismissed with a B-, and, well, maybe I've learned a thing or two since then. [+]

The Cecil Taylor Unit (1978, New World) With Jimmy Lyons (alto sax), Raphé Malik (trumpet), Ramsey Ameen (violin), Sirone (bass), Ronald Shannon Jackson (drums). Three pieces: two around the 14-minute mark, one at 29:41. This is a powerful group, the music often descending into what sounds like a sonic brawl, although it helps to focus on one thread and listen to the others respond to that. And it doesn't much matter which thread, although Lyons is probably key. As with much Taylor, it's hard to keep this shit straight, and the larger the group the tougher the task. These sessions also generated 3 *Phasis*. I give this one a slight edge, but damned if I can tell you why. [+]

Cecil Taylor: *One Too Many Salty Swift and Not Goodbye* (1978, Hatology -2CD) A sprawling work by one of Taylor's loudest and most dazzling groups, with Raphé Malik and Jimmy Lyons. [9]

Cecil Taylor: *It Is in the Brewing Luminous* (1980, Hat Art -90) A sextet: Taylor, Jimmy Lyons (alto sax), Ramsey Ameen (violin), Alan Silva (bass, cello), Jerome Cooper (drums, African bellaphone), Sunny Murray (drums). One piece, 68:58. A lot of this sounds fairly typical -- assuming you can adjust your frame of reference to the point where anything Taylor does is typical (and I'm starting to worry a bit that I can) -- but around 42 minutes in Ameen conjures up a kind of ethereal comping with Murray riding lightly on the cymbal, and Taylor dances all around them. Later on Jimmy Lyons does good work. Then it gets typical again. [+]

Cecil Taylor: *Erzulie Maketh Scent* (1988, FMP) One of Taylor's vast series of albums recorded in a week or so in Berlin in 1988; this one is solo, which with Taylor is a mixed blessing: the good news being that it's relatively easy to follow him, and as usual he has no trouble keeping an astonishing level of inventiveness going for an astonishingly long time. The bad news is that he's got so many solo albums and that it's damn hard to distinguish among them. I'll go out on a limb and conjecture that this is one of the better ones. [+]

Cecil Taylor European Orchestra: *Alms/Tiergarten (Spree)* (1988, FMP -2CD) Two disc-long pieces. Taylor kept his American bassist (William Parker, who wouldn't?), but doubled up on bass with Peter Kowald (given the opportunity, who wouldn't?). The band is otherwise full of top drawer European avant-gardists, including: Enrico Rava, Tomasz Stanko, Peter Brotzmann, Hans Koch, Evan Parker, Louis Sclavis, Gunter Hampel, and Han Bennink. The first piece, "Involution/Evolution," starts out moderately, and the piece unfolds without the usual Taylor chase. Like most avant big bands, the pleasures are in the details: a little snatch of vibes, a riff of trumpets, a little stretch of incipient melody. Some of the players are distinctive: Parker's circular breathing is unmistakable, and the sound of horses being slaughtered (not one I'm partisan to) is very likely Brotzmann's doing. And of course there's the piano player: even when he's laying back and enjoying the show Taylor's manages to throw in the occasional pounding chord, and his abstract rhythms are remarkable when counterposed against the dull roar of backing trombone. The second piece is more of the same. There's a nice stretch around 28-minutes in where a melody starts to swell over the trombones, but that plays itself out to not much effect. These big band things are always complicated, messy, frustrating -- even when there are lots of wonderful details. [5]

Cecil Taylor/William Parker/Tony Oxley: *Celebrated Blazons: The Feel Trio* (1990, FMP -93) I count 18 records for Taylor on FMP from 1988-91, an intense outpouring that dominates the later half of his career; several were Feel Trios, with longtime bassist Parker shoring up spectacular fireworks

from the others -- a rare record where the drummer gets in even better licks than Taylor. [9]

Cecil Taylor Ensemble: *Always a Pleasure* (1993, FMP -96) A rare post-Lyons larger group for Taylor: Longineu Parsons (trumpet), Harri Sjoström (soprano sax), Charles Gayle (tenor sax), Tristan Honsinger (cello), Sirone (bass), Rashid Bakr (drums). The Penguin Guide panned this, mostly for the ill fit of the saxophonists, but I hardly noticed them. The bits that repeatedly caught my ear were from the cellist, strongly backed by Sirone. Taylor's compositions seem more drawn out than usual, more leisurely, and that allows his extraordinary piano to dwell in relative pleasure. Still, I'm hedging a bit -- on some level this also sounds like every other Cecil Taylor record, and it's tough to make real fine distinctions there when you got other things to do with your life. [+]

Cecil Taylor: *Qu'a: Live at the Iridium Vol. 1* (1998, Cadence) This is much closer to par for the course regarding Taylor: one long piece of free jazz meanderings, in a quartet setting but with all ears on the piano, just in case the master does something amazing. [5]

Jack Teagarden

Jack Teagarden: *Texas Trombone* (1958, Black Lion -12) Louis Armstrong never went anywhere without a great, or at least a gruff, trombonist at his beck and call, and when he put his All-Stars together, this Texas was his pick, incidentally integrating the band -- a sign of change in 1947; live at the Orpheum in Seattle, usual songbook, with Don Ewell on piano and lesser knowns, with Jerry Fuller's clarinet especially noteworthy. [6]

Jack Teagarden and His Sextet: *Mis'ry and the Blues* (1961, Verve -03) Pretty much what you'd expect: Tea sings and plays trombone on familiar songs like "Basin Street Blues" -- a lovely rendition, in fact, leisurely, with a beautiful Henry Cuesta clarinet solo, and solos by Don Goldie (trumpet) and Don Ewell (piano) nearly as sublime. [+]

Jack Teagarden, Family & Friends: *A Hundred Years From Today* (1963, Grudge) A sentimental occasion -- not because it turned out to be Teagarden's last album, but because it was a reunion with family (two siblings and his mother play; the latter, he tells us, is 74 -- she was 16 when she had Jack -- and plays a pretty decent rag) and friends (including Pee Wee Russell, who shared top billing with Teagarden on their best album ever, cut back in 1938-40). Also showing up is Gerry Mulligan, who shares "Pee Wee's and Gerry's Blues." "Basin Street Blues" is done dixieland-style, and "Sweet Georgia Brown" even more so. Lots of between-song intros slow things down, but on occasions such as these that has its charm. [5]

Clark Terry

Trumpet player, came up in the bop era and made his first great album with Thelonious Monk, but got a good grounding in swing working both for Count Basie and Duke Ellington.

Clark Terry Quintet: *Serenade to a Bus Seat* (1957, Riverside/OJC) After duty with both Basie and Ellington, a straight hard bop set with one of the era's premier rhythm sections -- Wynton Kelly on piano, Paul Chambers on bass, Philly Joe Jones on drums -- and the ever-combative Johnny Griffin on tenor sax; Terry holds his own, and shines on "Stardust" when Griffin lays out. [8]

Clark Terry: *The Happy Horns of Clark Terry* (1964, Impulse) What makes him happy is playing

Ellington (and Carney and Tizol and Hodges), especially when Ben Webster sits in. [7]

Clark Terry: *It's What's Happenin* (1967, Impulse) Subtitled *The Varitone Sound of Clark Terry*, this quartet session was meant to demo Selmer's Varitone amplifier on trumpet -- the device, a sound processor, was more commonly used with saxophones. The gear doesn't get much of a workout -- the instrumental pieces are uncommonly nice, but "Electric Mumbles" plays games with Terry's voice, and his rap on "Take the 'A' Train" goes further. [6]

Henri Texier

Henri Texier: *Colonel Skopje* (1988, Evidence -95) Presumably this is the same record *Penguin Guide* lists as Label Bleu LBLC 6523. It reads that way: "a ragbag, too various to hang together convincingly, although Abercrombie's presence guarantees some interesting moments, as always." There is some interesting guitar here. Harder to figure out is just what Steve Swallow (electric bass to Texier's acoustic) and Joe Lovano (on flute as well as saxophones, the latter unspecified but only the tenor notable) are doing. Last piece is quite nice. [5]

Gary Thomas

Gary Thomas: *Till We Have Faces* (1992, JMT) With Pat Metheny (guitar), Tim Murphy (piano), Anthony Cox (bass), Terri Lyne Carrington (drums); sometimes Ed Howard subs on bass, and Steve Moss adds percussion. Thomas switches between tenor and soprano sax, and plays a bit of flute. I've never had a good sense of Thomas' playing, and the horn switching doesn't help. This has a somewhat slick feel, a sort of rolling stream of sound, rich and sumptuous, with few/any rough edges. That's a style that seems to take a lot of skill yet it doesn't leave a very distinct impression. Could be better than I know, but it doesn't grab me enough to make me really want to find out. [5]

Leon Thomas

Leon Thomas: *The Creator 1969-1973: The Best of the Flying Dutchman Masters* (1969-73, BGP -13) In a simpler time, he would have been a classic blues shouter. In the late 1960s he was networking with Louis Armstrong, Johnny Hodges, Don Cherry, Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp, and Oliver Nelson. He got his fluke hit with Sanders, "The Creator Has a Master Plan," and a record contract that ran five years and six albums, all long out of print. Early on he tried to continue the cosmic-black-power-funk vibe from Sanders and Shepp, to which he added a yodel that sounds weirder now than it did then, and when he ran out of new ideas he reverted to shouted blues and soft soul moves. I've sampled these records lightly, and always imagined that someone could pull a great compilation out of them. But this isn't it. I don't know whether that's because they avoided both the political cuts -- no "Dam Nam (Ain't Goin' to Vietnam)" -- and the long ones -- no "Pharoah's Tune (The Journey)" and a shorter "Umbo Weti" -- or they just failed to look beyond his headline albums to the side credits where he made his mark. [6]

Bob Thompson

Bob Thompson: *Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit* (1996, Ichiban) Pianist. AMG lists his Styles as: Lounge, Instrumental Pop, Post-Bop. He has a dozen albums, but doesn't seem to get much respect. The songs

here are mostly gospel -- "Deep River," "Wade in the Water," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," like that; the arrangements are luxurious: with rich, fluid piano; bright alto sax; extra latin percussion above and beyond the drums. It's a little too slick -- I guess that's why the "instrumental pop" label sticks. And the 7:43 "Study War No More" is stretched out so far you forget what it's about. [5]

Danny Thompson

Danny Thompson: *Whatever* (1988, Hannibal) Upright bass player, makes his bread and butter playing English folk or folk-rock, but he's a fabulous bassist, and with Tony Roberts on reeds this is one snazzy jazz album. And when you can spare the concentration, dig that bass player. [9]

Lucky Thompson

Lucky Thompson: *Tricotism* (1956, Impulse -93) Two albums recorded by Creed Taylor for ABC before Impulse was founded, this one was rescued from the closet, providing one of the tenor saxophonist's finest examples of swing to bop and back again. [10]

Lucky Thompson: *New York City, 1964-65* (1964-65, Uptown Jazz 2CD -09) An exceptional saxophonist whose slim discography has gradually built up as lost sessions and live shots have been uncovered; two more, the first disc an octet at the Little Theater, the second a quartet at the Half Note, neither indispensable but the sheer beauty of Thompson's tenor sax comes out especially in the smaller group setting. [7]

Lucky Thompson: *I Offer You* (1973, Beast Retro -97) There's no information in this package about when this was recorded, but AMG has an entry for an out-of-print LP by the same name released by Groove Merchant in 1973. Thompson gave up recording in 1974, so this may be one of his last records. Thompson plays soprano and tenor sax. The quartet is filled out by Cedar Walton on piano and electric piano, Sam Jones on bass, and Louis Hayes on drums. Thompson sounds great, much as he always does. [+]

Malachi Thompson

Malachi Thompson: *Rising Daystar* (1999, Delmark) Gary Bartz gets a "with Special Guest"; the only other sideman I recognize is the late Fred Hopkins, who plays on and gets a dedication for the final track, "Circles in the Air." Thompson calls his outfit "the Freebop Band" -- nothing I hear here really sounds Free to me, but it does produce a jaunty sort of post-bop, more in the direction of hard bop. Lot of piano here. Dee Alexander takes a vocal on "Surrender Your Love" -- jaunty, again. Well, spoke too soon: "Fanfare for Trane" is farther out -- rather typically so. "Song for Morgan" is better -- no need to apologize for hard bop there. The Hopkins piece at the end has no trumpet, just a fine bass solo, some drums, and Thompson rebopping over the free meter. It's odd, but fitting. [+]

Clifford Thornton

The Clifford Thornton New Art Ensemble: *Freedom & Unity* (1967, Atavistic -01) First piece was named "Free Huey" but the politics were less clear, mostly a desire to compose complexity and redouble it through improv; leader plays valve trombone, which with two bases holds the scattered

horns and vibes together, barely. [9]

Clifford Thornton: *The Panther and the Lash* (1970, Free America/Verve -05) A pan-African ethnomusicologist with an agenda -- his panther song is called "Free Huey" -- Thornton rarely recorded, but when his scattershot cornet and shenai give way to valve trombone the music steadies itself, poignant and powerful. [+]

Bobby Timmons

The Best of Bobby Timmons (1960-64, Riverside -04) A hard bop pianist much in demand in the late '50s/early '60s, not least because he wrote songs like "Moanin'" (when he played for Art Blakey) and "Dat Dere" (which Oscar Brown Jr. added a lyric to). This picks from his seven Riverside albums, mostly trios, with two solos and two cuts with a horn (Blue Mitchell). [+]

Keith Tippett

Keith Tippett & Louis Moholo: *No Gossip* (1980, FMP -82) Piano-drums duets, an intense fury of percussion from both artists, with titles suggesting the South African's politics, not that anyone here dissents. [8]

Keith Tippett: *Mujician I & II* (1981-86, FMP -88) Solo piano, cut in two widely separated sessions but pretty much seamless, mostly fast rhythmic fluttering although some of it sounds rather fishy, like the piano has been tampered with -- low parts with a lot of stringy reverb or just lots of rumble, high crystal clear. [6]

Keith Tippett: *The Dartington Concert* (1990, E.G. -92) Solo piano, one piece, 47:49 long, called "One for You, Dudu." A lot of intricate rocking back and forth, some interesting moves. Pretty good. [+]

Cal Tjader

Cal Tjader/Stan Getz: *Sextet* (1958, Fantasy/OJC -11) With Eddie Duran's guitar and Tjader's Latin vibes, this anticipates Getz's 1964 foray into bossa nova -- again, the sax seems lighter than air, floating away from the bubbly percussion and slinky guitar. [8]

Cal Tjader: *Plays the Contemporary Music of Mexico and Brazil* (1962, Verve -08) Arranged by Clare Fischer, who wrings any rhythmic complexity out of the music, leaving a soft, hapless backdrop for Tjader's vibes. [3]

The Best of Cal Tjader: Live at the Monterey Jazz Festival 1958-1980 (1958-80, MJF -08) A short set from 1958 with Buddy DeFranco bebop over the vibraphonist's Latin stew, and four choice 1972-80 shots, starting with Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry teaching him how to play "Manteca." [8]

Cy Touff

Cy Touff & Sandy Mosse: *Tickle Toe* (1981, Delmark -08) Two obscure Chicago jazzmen -- Touff plays bass trumpet and has connections that landed him a West Coast rep based mostly on an album for Pacific Jazz; Mosse plays tenor sax and is happy just to remind people of his idol Lester Young, author

of the title song; both dead now, this easy-going swing/bop session, something for the curious to remember them by. [7]

Ralph Towner

Ralph Towner: *Diary* (1973, ECM -74) Solo, 12-string and classical guitar, piano, gongs. This was playing along innocuously enough when the fourth cut ("Icarus") caught my ear. Finally paying attention, I quickly surmised that the reason was that he didn't merely find another twelve strings for his guitar: he picked up 88 on the piano, dubbing over the overstringed guitar. It's a gorgeous, striking piece, but the extra instrumentation really helps. The real solo guitar is often eloquent, but is inevitably less, even with the gongs. [+]

Ralph Towner: *Old Friends, New Friends* (1979, ECM) With Kenny Wheeler (trumpet, flugelhorn), David Darling (cello), Eddie Gomez (bass), and Michael DiPasqua (drums), the tendency is to be thick with strings, with tasteful decoration from Wheeler. Towner's preference for 12-string guitar reinforces that, although he also switches off to piano and French horn. This runs a bit too loose and too soft for my taste, although that's still where the more interesting pieces lie. [5]

Ralph Towner: *Solo Concert* (1979, ECM -80) Without the added support of his multitracked piano, this may be the best example of his naked guitar. [+]

Ralph Towner/Gary Peacock: *A Closer View* (1995, ECM) Despite all the jazz I've worked through, I still think of myself as having rock ears, which among other things means I expect the music to come to me. Of course, these quiet guitar/bass duets don't even try; however, when you do go to them, they really are exquisite -- at least as long as my rock ears can pay attention. [+]

Big Joe Turner

The Very Best of Big Joe Turner (1951-59, Rhino -98) Although limited to the prime Atlantic period, this at least suggests where he came from, and where he went to; regardless of documentary value, that doesn't make this better than *Greatest Hits*. [9]

Mark Turner

Mark Turner: *Yam Yam* (1994, Criss Cross -95) Turner's later (major label) records haven't impressed me much. He seems, in fact, to have been going through the same sort of major label softening that has afflicted Joshua Redman lately -- the two are roughly comparable talents, with roughly comparable styles. This one sure lives up to its reputation. With Brad Mehldau's razor sharp trio (Larry Grenadier on bass, Jorge Rossy on drums), and Kurt Rosenwinkel (guitar) for some extra color. [9]

Steve Turre

Steve Turre: *Right There* (1991, Antilles) There can be no doubt that Turre is one of the most impressive trombonists of our times. But I've never been so sure about the shells, which make an early appearance here. As do strings, the vocals of Akua Dixon Turre (not bad, but she seems to throw the band into slimy swing mode), congas, timbales, flute, and guest stars like Wynton Marsalis and Benny Golson. I just wish he'd play his horn more, as he does to excellent effect with virtually no

accompaniment on "Echoes of Harlem." [5]

Stanley Turrentine

Stanley Turrentine: *That's Where It's At* (1962, Blue Note -05): Mr. T's robust tenor is in full swing, especially when pianist Les McCann picks up the pace, which is most of the time; on the other hand, the ballads drag a bit compared to T's more typical organ-based soul jazz, but not enough to dampen spirits. [8]

Stanley Turrentine: *A Bluish Bag* (1967, Blue Note -07) Two big band sessions, with 6-7 horns and 3-4 rhythm each, the former chopped up for two 1975-79 albums, the latter stuck in the vaults until now; Mr. T doesn't get a lot of solo space, but Duke Pearson's arrangements give everyone a lot to do, and several cuts really swing together. [8]

Stanley Turrentine: *Return of the Prodigal Son* (1967, Blue Note -08) A Duke Pearson-produced tentet session brought back to its original shape after 7 of 10 tracks were cast off on various releases; in theory a big band for a big man, in practice he gets a little overwhelmed until the alternate take of "Dr. Feelgood," but the band never loses interest. [6]

Stanley Turrentine: *Sugar* (1970, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -10) Soul jazz man, cut his best records with cheezy organ and down-home grit, gets a little fancy this time -- electric piano and Ron Carter bass along with the organ, congas in addition to the drums, some of George Benson's tastiest guitar and the extra spit and polish of Freddie Hubbard's trumpet, which ultimately puts the record over the top -- also the bonus cuts, since this is music that needs to stretch out. [9]

Stanley Turrentine: *Salt Song* (1971, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) The excess -- banks of strings, a chorus on the gospel "I Told Jesus" -- doesn't help but hurt much either: all you need to do is focus on the tenor sax, which is all you will be doing anyway; the title cut is from Milton Nascimento, authenticated by Airto Moreira and Eumir Deodato, and they spliced a second Nascimento tune on as a bonus, which keeps the undertow light and frothy. [7]

Stanley Turrentine: *Don't Mess With Mister T.* (1973, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) More strings, extra horns, organ along with keybs, Eric Gale guitar, Bob James doing the arranging, but the material sticks to blues basics, and the tenor sax is rarely anywhere but front and center; reissue adds four bonus tracks, as have several previous iterations; title cut, by the way, credited to Marvin Gaye. [7]

Stanley Turrentine: *Jazz Moods: Cool* (1971-75, Epic/Legacy -05) He's the poor man's Ben Webster -- less vibrato, but a whole lot of soul. Creed Taylor's fancy backgrounds are an unnecessary complication for someone who did his best work in front of little more than wife Shirley Scott's organ, but he rarely fails to soar away. [+]

Chris Tyle

Chris Tyle's Silver Leaf Jazz Band of New Orleans: *New Orleans Wiggle* (1999, GHB) A rousing set of New Orleans-style classic jazz. A *Penguin Guide* crown record. [9]

McCoy Tyner

Pianist, joined John Coltrane's soon-to-be-famous Quartet in 1960 (ahead of Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison).

McCoy Tyner: *Inception* (1962, Impulse) With Art Davis and Elvin Jones, packing four originals including "Effendi" and the title tune along with two covers, including a "Speak Low" that makes clear his speed and wit. [8]

McCoy Tyner: *Reaching Fourth* (1963, Impulse) Henry Grimes and Roy Haynes for his second trio in the year. Four covers to two originals this time, takes his time and settles in for a long and beautiful career. [7]

McCoy Tyner: *Today and Tomorrow* (1963-64, Impulse -09) A mix of trio and sextet tracks, the horns an intriguing lineup of Thad Jones, John Gilmore, and Frank Strozier, the pianist hanging in and coming on strong in his spots. [7]

McCoy Tyner: *Tender Moments* (1967, Blue Note -04) A nonet with a lot of brass and James Spaulding flute, thickly arranged but rather impersonal, without much space for the pianist; this was the first of Tyner's many efforts at extended orchestration, and has its moments. [5]

McCoy Tyner: *Fly With the Wind* (1976, Milestone/Keepnews Collection -08) A symphony of sorts, tempestuous but wildly scattered including some of those dull atmospheric spots, performed by a massive string orchestra plus harp, wind instruments limited to oboe and flutes, a rhythm section with Ron Carter and Billy Cobham frantically struggling to keep up with the pianist. [5]

McCoy Tyner: *Horizon* (1979, Milestone -80) Fast, not least the piano leads, but excessively fleshed out with two saxes or flutes (George Adams and Joe Ford), John Blake's violin, and Guilherme Franco's congas; sweeps you away at first, but grows tiresome by the end. [5]

McCoy Tyner/Jackie McLean: *It's About Time* (1986, Blue Note) With Al Foster on drums, Marcus Miller or Ron Carter on bass, sometimes Steve Thornton on percussion, sometimes Jon Faddis on trumpet. McLean lays out on one piece, a Tyner-Carter-Foster trio. But all in all, this is pretty much what you would expect: McLean plays with typical aplomb, and Tyner is his usual distinctive self. This was cut about the same time as a similar duo that McLean did with Mal Waldron, *Left Alone '86* (Evidence), which I regard as one of the high points in either player's resumes. Tyner is, overall, a talent roughly comparable to Waldron, but he is a more complete and self-contained player; whereas Waldron challenges and provokes his partner, Tyner soothes and supports him. McLean, in turn, swings effortlessly here, whereas his playing with Waldron has a real edge to it. [+]

Gebhard Ullmann

Gebhard Ullmann: *Basement Research* (1993, Soul Note -95) German reed player, favors bass clarinet over soprano and tenor sax in this quartet which pits him against another tenor saxophonist (Ellery Eskelin), backed by bass (Drew Gress) and drums (Phil Haynes); the experiment worked so well he kept the title for similar groups with various lineup changes. [8]

James Blood Ulmer

James Blood Ulmer: *Black and Blues* (1990, DIW [91]) Quite a find. I've long loved *Odyssey*, and admired Ulmer's jazz playing, but I've never before been wowed by his blues shtick. But this one's avant-jazz with real bluesy tone and feel, a synthesis that works. [9]

Alan Vaché

Alan Vaché Big Four: *Revisited!* (1997, Nagel Heyer -98) With David Jones (cornet), Bob Leary (guitar), Phil Flanagan (bass); no drums, but for this kind of music they don't have much trouble keeping a steady rhythm going. While the cornet makes for a nice contrast on the hotter numbers, the key here is Vaché's clarinet -- beautiful tone, marvelous facility. There's little to fault here, but little to get excited about either. Compare, for instance, his "Panama" to the one Chris Barber cut on the album of the same name: this one is just fine, but Barber blew the house down. Leary's vocal on "She's Just Perfect for Me" is a plus. [+]

Kid Thomas Valentine

Kid Thomas-George Lewis *Ragtime Stompers* (1961, GHB) This is a superb piece of old-fashioned dixieland jazz, done the old-fashioned way, by old guys who grew up in the real thing. The rhythm is banjo-driven, and the three horns (Jim Robinson is a treat on trombone) fly off in different directions, somehow complementing each other along the way, just like classic New Orleans polyphony is supposed to. George Lewis's clarinet is everywhere, comping behind the vocal in "Salty Dog" and leading the "Easter Parade." [10]

Ken Vandermark

Steelwool Trio: *International Front* (1994, Okkadisk -98) Ken Vandermark with his Boston drummer (Curt Newton) and his Chicago bassist (Kent Kessler). That is, similar to Tripleplay but more avant -- McBride is partial to funk beats, Kessler is more likely to work the bow. Which makes it mostly a blowing session, mostly a referendum on Vandermark's improv moves. He sounds pretty sharp here. [9]

Ken Vandermark/Barrage Double Trio: *Utility Hitter* (1995, Quinnah -96) Two drummers (Hamid Drake, Curt Newton); two bassists (Nate McBride, Kent Kessler); two reed players (Vandermark, Mars Williams); organized as the left-channel Chicago Trio (Drake, Kessler, Williams) and the right-channel Boston Trio (McBride, Newton, Vandermark). Vandermark wrote six of the pieces, which have dedications and not-so-obscure reference to famous musical antecedents. The other five pieces are shorter improvisations, with descriptive titles like "Bass Duo," "Drum Duo," "Chicago Trio," can you guess the rest? The composed pieces are notably effective, even if the one dedicated to Albert Ayler cheats by descending into a massive screeching slugfest. The opener, "Over and Both," is the sort of good natured tenor duel that Lockjaw Davis and Johnny Griffin should inspire. The closer, "Polarity," is less obviously dedicated to Andrew Hill, keyed by an irresistible Drake rhythm and put over the top by Vandermark. The pieces for Mingus, Ornette, and Don Cherry are also fascinating. Even the "Bass Duo" is interesting. Strong stuff. Useful liner notes, [9]

The Vandermark 5: *Single Piece Flow* (1996, Atavistic -97) This was the first V5 record, albeit the

last one for me to get to. The band includes: Jeb Bishop (trombone, guitar), Kent Kessler (bass), Tim Mulvenna (drums), Vandermark (reeds), and Mars Williams (reeds). All compositions by Vandermark. I've changed the title format below so that it follows later practice. Songs: "Careen (for Jackie Chan)" (starts off with saxes careening, just like the action movie motif; then a stretch of Jeb Bishop guitar, then more horns); "Momentum (for Alan Dawson)" (the drummer, a major figure in the Boston jazz scene; a similar piece, except perhaps for the drum pattern, which is regular and propulsive; includes some major riffing by Vandermark); "Fence (for Robert Hendry)" (hmm, don't know who this is; this is a change of pace piece, sounds like bass clarinet with an atmospheric bass-drums backdrop); "Dark Janitor (for Jim Baker)" (presumably not the Bush family crony; there is a Jim Baker who plays piano and has recorded with several Vandermark groups -- Caffeine, Steam, Witches & Devils -- as well as Fred Anderson and Cornelius Cardew; this is built around unison horn refrains that punch up the tempo; trombone solo; more horns, with one breaking out of unison, then a rather impressive, squealing, careening saxophone solo); "The Mark Inside (for Johnny Hodges)" (Ellington's main man, the world's greatest alto saxophonist; has some characteristic Hodges tone colors, more than anything else); "Wood Skin Metal (for Jerry Deupree, Chris Bowman and Lawrence Cook)" (Deupree is a drummer, associated with Either/Orchestra, Morphine, and Joe Morris; Bowman is a jazz guitarist, based in Dayton OH, but doesn't have much of a portfolio; most likely Cook is a drummer who has worked with Bill Dixon, Alan Silva, Jemeel Moondoc, and Thurston Moore -- listed in AMG as "Laurence Cook"; there are several other musicians, plus an actor, none of which seem more likely); "Billboard (for Bill Barron)" (the saxophonist, brother of pianist Kenny Barron, who worked with Cecil Taylor early on, Ted Curson, Philly Joe Jones; opens with about 10 seconds of head before Vandermark cuts loose on his solo, with funk drums clearing the way; the saxes get funky too, the notes flying off at angles that point back to the drums); "Limited Edition (for Gil Evans)" (the arranger, best known for his work with Miles Davis; opens with a bass solo, then edges into a quiet theme, which slowly mutates and fractures; Bishop gets to do his best Derek Bailey bits on guitar, then rocks out a bit, with bass/drums pushing him on, then the saxes come back to finish the record off). [9]

The Vandermark 5: *Target or Flag* (1997, Atavistic -98) Songs: "Sucker Punch (for Phelps [Catfish Collins])" (starts off with a smashing riff, sustained with regular rhythm); "Attempted, Not Known (for Derek Bailey and George Lewis)" (dawdles a bit at first, with a little bit of hard-to-hear prepared guitar, probably Jeb Bishop, probably the nod to Bailey; a little clarinet, then Bishop on trombone, his real axe; Vandermark returns on tenor, launching into a marvelous solo, the sort of thing he's made a career out of; Bishop chips in more trombone); "The Start of Something (for Ellen Major)" (Vandermark's wife since 1996, a pediatrician); "Super Opaque (for Cecil Taylor)"; "Last Call (for Eddie Hazel)" (again, the funk quotient shoots through the roof); "New Luggage (for Shelly Manne)"; "8K (for Peter Brötzmann)"; "Fever Dream (for Dan Grzeca)" (a painter, a friend of Vandermark's; like the opener, this is built around an anthemic riff). [10]

Tripleplay: *Expansion Slang* (1998, Boxholder -00) A trio, with Nate McBride (bass), Curt Newton (drums), and Ken Vandermark (reeds). Two short pieces written by McBride, three long ones by Vandermark. McBride and Newton are both based in Boston, so the idea behind Tripleplay is to provide Vandermark with a regular band when he would visit the Hub. (He's originally from Rhode Island, and lived in Boston before moving to Chicago.) Outstanding sax here -- particularly on "Alumni Forms," which pitch-wise sounds like soprano, although I've never heard soprano played with such emphasis. [9]

The Vandermark 5: *Simpatico* (1998, Atavistic -99) I gave this a B first time around. The Penguin Guide rates it at 4-stars. So let's try to figure out who's right. But first, note that Mars Williams has been replaced with Dave Rempis on alto sax. Not to take anything away from Repis, but Williams, being older and long established with Hal Russell, was a more equal partner to Vandermark. Songs: "Vent (for Glenn Spearman)" (this one starts off real ugly, and doesn't straighten out much by the end); "Fact and Fiction (for Curtis Counce)" (precise and somewhat delicate, sort of the hallmarks of Counce's west coast style); "Full Deck (for Jack Montrose)" (this feels like a real saxophonist's piece -- it rips without wandering too far out); "Anywhere Else (for Sheila Major)" (Vandermark's wife; slows it down, patiently plots out complex shapes); "STHLM (for Mats Gustafsson)" (feels like a big band piece, with a lot of unison playing behind the ripping saxophone; Vandermark's solo breaks are fast and pressurized; Gustafsson is a guy who Vandermark has played with quite a bit, so it's not surprising that he should have him down pat); "Cover to Cover (for Frank Butler)" (presumably the jazz drummer [1928-84] who recorded two records on Xanadu, and played with Miles Davis, Harold Land, Art Pepper, John Coltrane, Curtis Counce, and others; again, this is a long piece with a lot of interesting work in it); "Point Blank (for Frank Rosolino)" (the trombonist, of course, although this seems like a pretty far out piece for such a mainstream player; this reminds me instead of some of Roswell Rudd's avant-garde wrecks); "Encino (for John Carter)" (the clarinetist, although this piece seems to have more trombone and saxophone than clarinet; again, this is slow, awkward, high pressure stuff; many of these pieces meander, in a way they remind me of Mingus at his most unfocused and gnarly). Cook/Morton write about this one, "this supercharged and superbly focused set is surely the group's best to date." But I can't say that my own contrary view has changed much. There pieces here that are indeed impressive (the Montrose and Gustafsson are my favorites), but as a whole it doesn't quite come through. Interesting, though, that so much of the dedication is toward west coast players from the cool jazz period. [5]

Ken Vandermark's Joe Harriott Project: *Straight Lines* (1999, Atavistic) Vandermark's Joe Harriott project was triggered by the reissue of Harriott's albums in the UK. [9]

Ken Vandermark's Sound in Action Trio: *Design in Time* (1999, Delmark) Another formal experiment: the gimmick here is to match Vandermark up with two drummers: Sun Ra-veteran Robert Barry and frequent collaborator Tim Mulvenna. Vandermark wrote 4 of the 11 pieces; the others come from Ornette Coleman (3), Sun Ra, Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, and Thelonious Monk. [9]

The Vandermark 5: *Burn the Incline* (1999, Atavistic) Songs: "Distance (for Joe Morris)" (the Boston-based guitarist, whose path has no doubt crossed Vandermark's; starts unconventionally with a bass solo; drums and alto sax [that would be Rempis] come in, picking up the pace; 5:40 in this stops and changes direction, with Jeb Bishop's guitar most prominent, perhaps recapitulating the earlier sax; around 7:45 it stops and shifts again, with both guitar and sax [Vandermark] getting funkier; don't know what this has to do with Morris); "The Cooler (for Pandelis Karayorgis)" (the pianist, who has worked with Vandermark elsewhere; this, of course, has no piano, so the mapping is harder to discern; however, it is a spacious piece, a fairly steady rhythm with Vandermark on bass clarinet and Rempis adding the decoration); "Late Night Wait Around (for Ab Baars)" (the Dutch clarinetist, perhaps best known for his work with the ICP Orchestra, although he's crossed paths with Vandermark several times; this piece is quiet, toneful, a bit too fragmentary to pass for beautiful); "Roulette (for Nate McBride)" (Vandermark's Boston-based bassist and furniture maker; this wakes things up quickly, with Bishop's trombone especially prominent); "Accident Happening (for William Parker)" (the bass player; as far as

I know, the only times Vandermark and Parker have played together have been in Peter Brötzmann's big band; this starts off with a rough, fevered sax solo, in a style not far removed from Charles Gayle; after awhile, this breaks down to bass and drums, with the drum sound dulled, like a frame drum; rough saxophone returns, again suggesting Gayle, or perhaps Ivo Perelman; closes on a crashing note); "In Focus (for Per Henrik Wallin)" (the Swedish pianist; something a bit bop-ish, with Bishop's guitar filling in behind the saxophone; this winds up being, I think, a typical example of what makes this group so strong: the Kessler-Mulvenna rhythm section can keep an interesting beat, and Vandermark in particular can weave his solos any way he wants); "The Trouble Is (for Misha Mengelberg)" (the Ukraine-born, Dutch-based pianist, a major figure in Europe's avant-garde; again, this has one of those extended, pastoral feels, which doesn't quite jive with what I know about Mengelberg); "Ground (for The Ex)" (the Ex were/are a Dutch rock group -- sometimes described as post-punk, sometimes as just experimental -- featuring a guitarist named Terrie Ex, who has in turn recorded duets with Ab Baars and Han Bennink; rough again; a lot of trombone). [+]

Fred Van Hove

Fred Van Hove/'t Nonet: *Suite for B . . . City* (1996, FMP) Nonet seems to be some fremdwort for "too many horns," but the real atrocity here is vocalist Annick Nozati, who makes me think that Aebi would be an improvement. The short sections when Van Hove gets to play his piano without horns or voice are actually quite impressive -- angular and abstract but not much like anyone else I can think of -- not Cecil Taylor, but sort of in that direction. (Joachim Kühn?) Lines for one or two horns can also be phrased beautifully. There's also some amusing trombone (Paul Rutherford? or Johannes Bauer?) in the middle of the long fourth piece -- and three minutes from the end Van Hove cranks up the piano in a fast rhythm, the voice zings in, and it busts all to hell, a very remarkable onslaught of sound. The last piece reprises all of the above. I'm impressed enough to want to hear something else by him. But I doubt if I'll ever play this one again. [3]

Sarah Vaughan

Sarah Vaughan: *In Hi-Fi* (1949-53, Columbia/Legacy -07) Mostly 1950 recordings with a jazz group including Miles Davis, Tony Scott, Benny Green, and Budd Johnson, a big improvement over the orchestral dreck Columbia usually favored (can we blame that on Mitch Miller?). Originally collected in 1955, and padded out in the reissue with alternates to 21 tracks. Not her best timing or intonation, but she hits most of the standards distinctively. [6]

Sarah Vaughan: *Love Songs* (1949-53, Columbia/Legacy -04) Her Columbia recordings, with their lush but utterly swingless orchestration, were her pedestal period: she was the perfect singer ("a startlingly pure contralto with a four-octave range") bathed in adulation like decadent royalty; I can't stand those records, but this one is short and ends with two cuts caressed by Miles Davis' trumpet. [4]

Sarah Vaughan and Her Trio: *At Mister Kelly's* (1957, Verve -07) With Jimmy Jones on piano, Richard Davis on bass, and Roy Haynes on drums, should be the sort of group that cracks Vaughan out of her statuesque diva pose and loosens her up, but it doesn't work out that way; note that this only has 9 of 20 songs on the 1991 CD. [5]

Sarah Vaughan: *The Benny Carter Sessions: The Explosive Side of Sarah Vaughan/The Loney Hours* (1962-63, Roulette -94) Two early '60s albums on one CD, two orchestras arranged by Benny

Carter. The first is sharp and brassy, evidently with musicians borrowed from Count Basie. The second deploys strings, predictably less fun. It also is less of a challenge to Vaughan, whose undoubted greatness as a singer is always in danger of lapsing into narcissism. This holds up past the first half, but slips badly toward the end, especially on "These Foolish Things" and "The Man I Love" -- songs you'd expect her to know what to do with by now. [5]

Sarah Vaughan: *Viva! Vaughan* (1964, Verve -01) Four sessions from August 1964, with big bands directed and produced by Quincy Jones. The bands favor latin rhythms, underscored from the start with a pretty good take on "The Boy From Ipanema," followed by a bouncy "Fascinating Rhythm." "Fever" is done with congas, her lines reinforced by the horns, and her voice does some amazing things -- this reminds me that even though I've rarely liked her records, I've always had to admire her control. The main thing I've disliked about Vaughan over the years has been the torch songs, which are few but present here: she had a truly extraordinary voice, but often put it in service of truly awful music, or more precisely put it on a pedestal to be worshipped by inevitably awful music. This one, at least, is more interesting than not. [+]

Sarah Vaughan: *Live at the 1971 Monterey Jazz Festival* (1971, MJF -07) A singer I've never much liked even though sometimes I can hear some of what others hear in her -- the unworldly deep voice, the extraordinary precision and uncanny musician sense in her dynamics; this is not the place to start: her range is narrowed by time and most likely by acoustics, and she scats way too much -- especially in the blistering all-star jam that takes up the last third of the album. [5]

Sarah Vaughan: *Copacabana* (1979, Pablo -88) Cut in Brazil, with guitarist Helio Delmiro and various other uncredited singers and musicians, though much of this comes off as intimate. This was well into her career. It's not clear whether her voice just wasn't as limber as earlier, but she's always been much too proper and precise to fit comfortably with such light and fluffy music, and I think that's where this record doesn't quite work. Not that the misfit is gross; she tries, and sometimes that's good enough. But sometimes not. [4]

Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson

Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson with the Cannonball Adderley Quintet: *Cleanhead & Cannonball* (1961-62, Milestone -02) This is one I've been looking for for years -- originally on Landmark, and long out of print -- so finally hearing it is . . . [9]

Eddie Cleanhead Vinson: *Kidney Stew Is Fine* (1969, Delmark -93) Singing saxist, like Cleanhead, but better than usual. [9]

Eddie Vinson: *I Want a Little Girl* (1981, Pablo/OJC) Perfunctory Pablo record, good sound, warm band, standard repertoire. Big Joe Turner made 'em by the dozen, so why not Cleanhead? [5]

Miroslav Vitous

Miroslav Vitous: *Emergence* (1985, ECM -86) Solo bass. First cut is called "Epilogue," and winds on for 8:07. Final cut is "Variations on Spanish Themes," a nod to Miles Davis' *Sketches of Spain*. In between are thoughtful titles, including the four-part "Atlantic Suite" and "Regards to Gershwin's Honeyman." Throughout is a lot of thoughtful bass -- mostly plucked, some arco, not a hint of the avant-gardist penchant for what I've elsewhere called "stupid bass tricks." These things always strike

me as underdressed -- I've spent a lot of time listening to bass players in the last year or so, and I love the instrument, but it's almost always the backbone to something else, and it's hard to tell what until you see it fleshed out. [+]

Miroslav Vitous/Jan Garbarek: *Atmos* (1992, ECM -93) These are slow and relatively static pieces, mostly written by the bass player, who gives himself a lot of space. Garbarek plays along, either amplifying or answering the bass leads. Still, anything that Garbarek does is bound to be lovely: he plays tenor as well as soprano saxophone here, and gets a shimmering sound out of the tenor that is every bit as distinctive as his trademark soprano. Quite lovely. [+]

Alexander von Schlippenbach

Alexander von Schlippenbach: *The Living Music* (1969, Atavistic -02) A septet, more a stripped down version of Globe Unity Orchestra than anything else, with two brass (Manfred Schoof on cornet, Paul Rutherford on trombone), two reeds (Peter Brötzmann on tenor sax, Michel Pilz on bass clarinet, both on bari sax), enough horn power to raise the roof, with the piano-bass-drums tending to slash and bang, quite dramatic but surprisingly coherent, breaking new ground. [7]

Alexander von Schlippenbach Trio: *Pakistani Pomade* (1972, Atavistic -03) With Paul Lovens (drums) and Evan Parker (soprano and tenor sax), the genesis of a trio that would still be going strong forty years later. Very raw free jazz, the sax thin and scratchy, the piano slamming hard. [8]

Schlippenbach Quartet: *Hunting the Snake* (1975, Atavistic -00) Really unheard music, broadcast on Radio Bremen then shelved for a quarter century; with Peter Kowald on bass on top of the pianist's regular trio -- saxophonist Evan Parker and percussionist Paul Lovens -- for four 20-minute (two more, two less) pieces; somewhat unfocused as a whole, but each player does remarkable things throughout. [6]

Schlippenbach Trio: *Elf Bagatellen* (1990, FMP) That would be pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach, working with Evan Parker (soprano and tenor sax) and Paul Lovens (drums); Parker's sax runs scratch at the surface, tearing it down rather than trying to build something on top -- an effect both self-limiting and bravely tenacious. [7]

Collin Walcott

Collin Walcott/Don Cherry/Nana Vasconcelos: *Codona* (1978, ECM) The first of three albums this trio recorded, all under the Codona name. I haven't heard the later ones. Walcott is an American who, having studied with Ravi Shankar and Alla Rakha, plays sitar and tabla, and is best known for his role in Oregon. Cherry is a trumpet player who first rose to fame in Ornette Coleman's classic group; in later years he travelled extensively, cultivating eclectic pan-world interests. He is one of the most important figures in post-1960 jazz. Vasconcelos is a Brazillian percussionist. I haven't heard much by him, but his 1979 album *Saudades* is regarded highly. The first cut is a Walcott composition, which lets him stretch out on sitar, with Cherry joining in on flute. Cherry also plays flute on the low-key title cut. Both cuts are surpassingly mild. Cherry's trumpet comes out on the third cut, a short medley of two Ornette Coleman pieces leading to Stevie Wonder's "Sir Duke"; the medley also features interesting work by Vasconcelos. After that, the music opens up a bit. While this is an interesting experiment, I don't think that it comes together as well as it ought to. [5]

Terry Waldo

Terry Waldo's Gutbucket Syncopators: *The Ohio Theatre Concert* (1974, Delmark -09) Ragtime piano and ragged trad jazz, with an embedded 9-song set featuring Edith Wilson, a classic blues singer who goes back further than Bessie Smith. [7]

Mal Waldron

Soul Eyes: The Mal Waldron Memorial Album (1957-62, Prestige -03) The late pianist was always most famous for having accompanied Billie Holiday during her waning years, but his own career extended beyond Holiday by 40+ years and many miles. His later work could be quite adventurous -- cf. *The Git Go* (1986, Soul Note) and *Crowd Scene* (1989, Soul Note), two larger groups with a lot of horns; *Left Alone* (1986, Evidence), with Jackie McLean in miraculous form; *Songs of Love and Regret* (1985, Freelance), an intimate duo with Marion Brown. But in his early years, which is what Prestige had to choose from in culling this loving memento, he showed a rare knack for crafting ballads, and exceptional skill at accompanying a wide range of other players -- Gene Ammons, Eric Dolphy, Steve Lacy, John Coltrane. Most of these cuts were originally released under other names -- Holiday's "God Bless the Child" was on Webster Young's *For Lady*, his own "Dear Elaine" was on a Teddy Charles album, even his solo "A Portrait of Bud Powell" originally came out on a Charles Mingus comp. But the steady hand here is the pianist, and he's worth concentrating on. Monk's "Bye-Ya," with Lacy, is another standout, and Ammons closes out with a gorgeous piece. [9]

Mal Waldron: *Quiet Temple* (1964, Black Lion -12) Trio, originally released as *Les Nuits de la Negritude*, helps fill a big gap between the pianist's prolific 1950s emergence -- with Mingus and McLean, accompanying Billie Holiday and other singers, in his own trios and solos -- and his post-1970 avant-garde fruition; most pieces are built from dense rhythmic blocks, but give him a break and he's as thoughtful as ever. [9]

Mal Waldron: *The Search* (1970s, Black Lion -12) Previously unissued piano trio, two songs (one also on a 1972 Enja album), 33:24, no credits for bass-drums, may have been recorded at Montmartre Jazzhuis in Copenhagen; second piece, "Entracte," is especially strong with its piano-drums dialogue; docked a bit for lack of credits. [7]

Mal Waldron With the Steve Lacy Quintet (1972, Free America/Verve -05) Waldron and Lacy made some fine duet records later, so the problem here is the busy and rather squeaky Quintet, to which Waldron adds some welcome punch. [5]

Greg Wall

The Wall-London Band: *Birth & Rebirth* (1999, Not Two) Tenor saxophonist Greg Wall and trumpeter Frank London, who also do business as Hasidic New Wave; this is more postbop than klezmer, the band including Josh Roseman on trombone and Ethan Iverson on piano, with a vocal by Ryvka Blumenleitz. [6]

Bennie Wallace

Bennie Wallace: *Mystic Bridge* (1982, Enja -87) With Chick Corea (piano), Eddie Gomez (bass), and

Dannie Richmond (drums), all names prominent on the front cover -- they are, after all, all names to brag about. This record is early and, by subsequent standards, a bit adventurous. Later on he has turned out to be a smooth ballad player, but here he stretches out, with ideas tied to his previous work on Monk, as well as his take on Rollins and Coltrane. Some nice work by Corea -- evidently this album was originally known as *Bennie Wallace Trio & Chick Corea*. [+]

Bennie Wallace: *Someone to Watch Over Me* (1999, Enja) Tenor sax is the sexiest of all instruments, and Wallace has the quietstorm shtick covered. With each new album he sounds more like Barney Wilen, which is serious praise. [9]

Fats Waller

Fats Waller: *A Handful of Keys: 1922-1935* (1922-35, Jazz Legends -03) His fleet fingerwork is much admired by formalists who never warmed to the humor of his songs or his sly, jiveass way of singing and wisecracking on the fly. Fans of the latter find the pianistics to be a diversion; the compilers here try nobly to cover all the bases, including some of his early organ jams, inevitably disappointing both camps. The obvious thing would be for Sony/BMG/Legacy, which now owns the catalog, to do a 2-CD *Essential* with one disc of each. Me, I'm ticked off that Bluebird let their complete series go out of print before I picked it all up. [+]

Fats Waller: *I'm Gonna Sit Right Down: The Early Years, Part 2* (1935-36, RCA -2CD) First disc is as good a side of Waller as I've heard; second slips a little. [9]

Per Henrik Wallin

Per Henrik Wallin Trio: *The Stockholm Tapes* (1975-77, Ayler -04) Refreshing thrash, as Wallin's rockish piano takes a back seat to the poking and prodding of Lars-Göran Ulander's alto sax, but he's still more likely to chime against the grain than comp along. [+]

Per Henrik Wallin/Johnny Dyani/Erik Dahlbäck: *Burning in Stockholm* (1981, Atavistic -04) Wallin's piano rocks, setting up huge cascades of rhythm, similar to Keith Jarrett's famous *Köln Concert*, but tougher; moreover, bass and drums are constantly engaged. [9]

George Wallington

The George Wallington Trios (1952-53, Prestige/OJC -90) Eight cuts from 1952, seven from 1953. The bassists change, but they're all serious names and play big: Charles Mingus (4 cuts), Oscar Pettiford (5 cuts), Curly Russell (6 cuts). The drummer is Max Roach. Wallington was an early bop pianist, born in Sicily in 1924 (original name: Giacinto Figlia), moved to New York as a baby. Good player, although I'm not sure that I quite get him. [+]

Jack Walrath

Jack Walrath: *I Am the Walrath* (1979-92, 32 Jazz -00) Walrath plays trumpet. I tend to associate him with Charles Mingus: he played on several late period Mingus albums, and has been a regular contributor to the Mingus Big Band and its predecessor, the Mingus Dynasty. The most striking things about his music are his humor and a sprightly edginess to his play. Those are, of course, Mingus

trademarks, but you can also think of him as a Lester Bowie without a race card up his sleeve. This is a compilation picked mostly from albums Walrath recorded for Muse, plus a couple of cuts from his first LP, 1979's *Demons in Pursuit*. The Muse albums include some dandies, like *Out of the Tradition* (1990) and *Serious Hang*. This, of course, slides around a lot, but it's always interesting and frequently great. Walrath selected the cuts and produced the comp himself. [9]

Jack Walrath and the Masters of Suspense: *Hip Gnosis* (1995, TCB -96) Trumpet player, joined the Mingus band in 1974 and continued to play in various Mingus big bands; the group includes two members of Screaming Headless Torsos -- vocalist Dean Bowman and guitarist David Fiuczynski -- working through a Latin-funk-fusion that seems much richer than four instrumentalists. [7]

Cedar Walton

Cedar Walton: *Manhattan Afternoon* (1992, Criss Cross -94) Piano trio, with David Williams (bass) and Billy Higgins (drums). Bright, sharp, everything you could ask for, including a couple of great covers that really wake you up: "St. Thomas" (Sonny Rollins) and "I Mean You" (Thelonious Monk). [9]

Carlos Ward

Carlos Ward: *Live at the Bug & Other Sweets* (1994, Peull Music -95) The "Live at the Bug" section is pretty solid free jazz: a trio, with Pheeroan Aklauff and William Parker. The "other sweets" include some film music, some synth sketches, and a few sketchy vocal pieces, none of which does much for me. [4]

David S. Ware

David S. Ware: *Third Ear Recitation* (1992, DIW -93) Although they don't get billing, this is a Quartet album, with William Parker, Matthew Shipp, and Whit Dickey. The second cut is Sonny Rollins' "East Broadway Run Down" -- an early '60s piece that was meant to give Coltrane and Dolphy a run for their money -- and Shipp has an interesting piano interlude: one hesitates to call it a solo because it is really just a series of rhythmic figures, which continues in the background when Ware returns to finish the piece off. Ware's "The Chase" starts out remarkably, before it evolves back into a Ware blowfest. Throughout, Ware's saxophone is bracing. On the cover he stands on a promontory (looks a bit like Bear Mountain) and blows out into the wilderness. For much of this album the wilderness has to take notice: Ware's playing is rarely less than ferocious. But the closing "Autumn Leaves" has an intriguing quiet spot, and Ware's reassertion of the melody is both forceful and articulate. There's a lot going on here, especially with Shipp, and I'm nowhere near close to having it figured out. [9]

Henry P. Warner

Henry P. Warner/Earl Freeman/Philip Spigner: *Freestyle Band* (1984, NoBusiness -12) Spigner's hand drums set up a nice homely vibe that Warner's clarinet sometimes flows with and sometimes cuts against; Freeman plays electric bass and piano, most often against the current, just to keep it all interesting. [8]

Dinah Washington

Dinah Washington: *Mellow Mama* (1945, Delmark -92) Three early sessions for Apollo Records, with a group of then-unknowns (except maybe Lee Young, Lester's drummer brother), but history would soon recognize Lucky Thompson (tenor sax), Milt Jackson (vibes), and Charles Mingus (bass). Most of the songs have "Blues" in the title; two others have "Voot" and the only one left is called "My Lovin' Papa," so there's nothing out of the ordinary here. She sings fine, and handles the double entendres with aplomb. Thompson really sounds great, and Jackson swings as always. This was about the time she cut "Blow Top Blues" and the like; nothing here is that good, but all of it is very similar. [9]

Dinah Washington: *The Best in Blues* (1943-53, Verve -97) She could (and did) sing everything, but the core of her work are her "blues" -- more a matter of form than content, since the content usually reveals a firmly centered woman, more than a little risqué. Picked from the major period of her work, this includes several classics: "Evil Gal Blues," "Baby, Get Lost," "Trouble in Mind," "Salty Papa Blues," "New Blowtop Blues," and especially the topical "TV Is the Thing This Year." The bonus cuts are redundant. [9]

The Best of Dinah Washington [20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection] (1949-61, Hip-O -02) Styled herself "queen of the blues" but she aimed more for crossover pop and landed more in jazz even though, until her three top-ten pop hits in 1959-60, she spent most of her career on the r&b charts; trying to compile her by checking the charts is a fool's errand, guaranteeing you'll miss her most interesting work and wind up with lots of lame big band and string arrangements. [7]

The Complete Roulette Dinah Washington Sessions (1962-63, Mosaic -5CD -04) Ruth Lee Jones got her start with Lionel Hampton's early '40s big band, recorded extensively for Mercury, moved on to Roulette in 1962, and died from an accidental pill overdose in 1963, not yet 40. She was a totally self-possessed singer. It's often said that she could sing any kind of music, and she did, but she made it all sound much the same -- a reflection of her own magnificence. She worked hard for eighteen months at Roulette, singing pop songs and delving back into her blues songbook -- always backed with big bands, more often than not with strings, toiling skillfully but anonymously. Only once in these five-plus hours was I moved to look up a guitar (Billy Butler) and saxophone (Illinois Jacquet), but there was never any doubt about the voice or the singer. The completism is remarkably consistent, but it's also the dead end of big band singers. One can only wonder what she might have done had she lived into the era of black power and feminism. [+]

Grover Washington

Grover Washington Jr.: *Inner City Blues* (1971, Verve -08) First album by the smooth jazz legend, runs with two Marvin Gaye smashes and respectable fare like "Georgia on My Mind" and "I Loves You, Porgy"; Creed Taylor produced and Bob James arranged the lush synthy backdrop, but Washington's deep, clear sax carries the day. [6]

Grover Washington Jr.: *All the Kings Horses* (1972, Verve -08) Same formula, substituting Aretha Franklin and Bill Withers songs for Marvin Gaye, which dials the funk back a bit, lets the orchestration swell, and undercuts the saxophone, which is really the only reason we're here. [5]

Grover Washington Jr.: *Soul Box* (1973, Verve -08) Creed Taylor produced, Bob James arranged and conducted, the usual crew played, the saxophonist blew elegantly; the key advantage here was that the

seven songs spread out over 2 LPs, one or two cuts per side, the grooves stretched out, the synth simplified, the sax craftily paced, poised to climax. [9]

Grover Washington Jr.: *Feels So Good* (1975, Verve -09) The first Washington album that actually sounds funky, a credit more to bassist Louis Johnson than to Bob James, who would just as soon recycle disco schmaltz [7]

Grover Washington Jr.: *A Secret Place* (1976, Verve -09) Cover depicts Washington playing a soprano sax in the woods, and indeed there's more soprano here than heretofore; it floats aimlessly over the standard issue funk, where the rarer tenor sax at least tries to grapple to force some form of coherent whole. [5]

Grover Washington Jr.: *Reed Seed* (1977, Verve -09) His final album for Kudu -- the only one omitted from this series is *Mr. Magic*, regarded well enough it didn't need a budget reissue; by this point he's settled into utter pleasantries, mild funk and silky soul, with Marvin Gaye giving way to Billy Joel. [5]

Ethel Waters

An Introduction to Ethel Waters: Her Best Recordings 1921-1940 (1921-40, Best of Jazz -94) Starts with a 1921 take on "There'll Be Some Changes Made" -- an auspicious debut, although the sound is badly muted. Most of this is first rate -- it duplicates 8 of the 17 songs on Columbia/Legacy's *Incomparable Ethel Waters*, while increasing the total to 22 songs. Sometimes she tended to get all melodramatic in the overbearing style of the times, as on this disc's "Memories of You." On the other hand, the sassy crunch with which she sings "You Can't Stop Me From Loving You" is hers alone. A legend to many pre-WWII connoisseurs, I find her a bit dated; but she connects often enough to be more than just history. [9]

The Incomparable Ethel Waters (1933-40, Columbia/Legacy -03) The first Afro-American pop star (as opposed to blues or jazz star), although there's no reason to think she ever forgot where she crossed over from -- indeed, she incorporated it into her accomplishment; her earlier hits have only been collated casually, often with rough sound, but this one gives her a fair hearing. [9]

Patty Waters

Patty Waters: *The Complete ESP-Disk' Recordings* (1965-66, ESP-Disk -05) Two albums, *Sings* and *College Tour*, squeezed onto one disc. I just have a CDR with no extra info, so can't comment on packaging, documentation, etc. First album has one side of minimal piano with voice and a 13:56 rant of "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair" on the other side. The live second splits the difference. She takes chances pushing her vocals to the outer limits of emotion, but I don't hear much more than effect -- a cult item with hints of interest. [5]

Marzette Watts

Marzette Watts: *Marzette Watts & Company* (1966, ESP-Disk -12) Saxophonist, was a founder of SNCC but escaped Alabama for New York, then Denmark, leaving this and one other album (1968) before dying just shy of 60 in 1998. With Byard Lancaster (alto sax), Clifford Thornton (trombone),

Sonny Sharrock (guitar), Karl Berger (vibes), Henry Grimes (bass), and J.C. Moses (drums), this should be a powerhouse, but comes off a bit underdefined, as if no one (but Berger) wants to take charge. [6]

Eberhard Weber

Eberhard Weber: *Rarum XVIII: Selected Recordings* (1974-2000, ECM -04) The German bassist mostly works with open, airy expanses of sound. It's tempting, especially given his early album titles, to think of him as a painter (a watercolorist), dabbing pastels on pastoral canvases, with only an occasional streak of brightness imparted by a colleague -- a Jan Garbarek, Paul McCandless, Charlie Mariano, Gary Burton, Pat Metheny, Bill Frisell. Yet most of the guests here are as dull as Weber (even Mariano, whose own records are often incandescent). Still, this generalization underrates him. Teamed with someone like Jon Christensen he can kick up a rhythm, and on his solo album *Pendulum* he shows a wide range of skills. [5]

Ben Webster

Ben Webster: *Birdland 1952* (1952, Jazz Anthology -91) Live shot, basically a bootleg, of the tenor sax great backed by John Lewis, Milt Jackson, Percy Heath, and Kenny Clarke, better known as the Modern Jazz Quartet; the Brute struts through "Confirmation" as well as "Cottontail," and wrings every last tear from "Danny Boy"; the vibes seem a bit odd at first, but Bags can't help but swing. [8]

Ben Webster: *Soulville* (1957, Verve -03) The Brute hangs up his gloves and pitches woo, with Oscar Peterson's trio swooning in the background; the bonus tracks are just more of the same. [10]

Ben Webster/Johnny Hodges Sextet: *The Complete 1960 Jazz Cellar Session* (1960, Solar -11) With Lou Levy on piano and Herb Ellis on guitar, aside from five "bonus tracks" where Ray Nance and Lawrence Brown drop in, with Russ Freeman on piano and Emil Richards on vibes; the sort of light blues-based thing they could do by rote, but utterly charming, as always. [9]

Ben Webster: *For Lovers* (1954-64, Verve -05) The slowest songs they could find, which except for the one with strings are little more than the big man breathing, sighing, wooing through his horn, with a vibrato as thick and luxurious as mink. [9]

Ben Webster: *See You at the Fair* (1964, Impulse -93) That would be the New York World's Fair, in one of the Brute's last American albums before removing himself to Copenhagen. [9]

Ben Webster: *For Lovers* (1954-64, Verve -05) The slowest songs they could find, which except for the one with strings are little more than the big man breathing, sighing, wooing through his horn, with a vibrato as thick and luxurious as mink. [9]

Ted Weems

Ted Weems: *Greatest Hits* (1923-33, Collectors' Choice Music -00) A popular crooner/bandleader from the '20s, best known for the novelty "Piccolo Pete" -- but most of these songs were greater or lesser pop hits, including two at #1: "Somebody Stole My Gal," and "Heartaches," a reprise cut ten years later. Charming stuff, often delightful. [+]

Dicky Wells

Dicky Wells: *Bones for the King* (1958, Felsted) One of the swing era's top trombonists, a star with Fletcher Henderson and Count Basie; first side adds Vic Dickenson, Benny Morton, and George Matthews for a trombone quartet, with an amusing vocal on "Sweet Daddy Spo-Do-O"; second side is more trad, trading lines with Buck Clayton, Rudy Rutherford, and Buddy Tate, with Jo Jones keeping time. [7]

Dicky Wells: *Trombone Four in Hand* (1959, Felsted) More of his trombone quartet, with Skip Hall's organ (or piano) and Kenny Burrell or Everett Barksdale on guitar, sticks close to the blues base, with one vocal, where Wells and Vic Dickenson detail their tastes in women. [6]

Dick Wellstood

Dick Wellstood: *Live at the Sticky Wicket* (1986, Arbors -2CD -97) A fine, old-fashioned pianist, working solo in a bar, playing rags and swing and even a little bebop (e.g., "Giant Steps" as a rag), negotiating the tunes as he goes along; released ten years after his death, this is meant as a remembrance, so nothing is left out, which seems about right. [8]

Fred Wesley

Fred Wesley: *Comme Ci Comme Ça* (1991, Antilles) The great JB trombonist, with Maceo Parker, Karl Denson, Hugh Ragin, Rodney Jones, Peter Madsen, Anthony Cox, Bill Stewart, and Teresa Carroll -- just the names but no instruments were listed on the back cover, but aside from Carroll (vocals) I'd have no problems filling them in. Madsen, Cox and Stewart are first rate jazz pros, but Jones (guitar) has never impressed me, and the horns don't promise much. Ragin gets in a decent solo, but not enough trombone, not enough grit, not funky enough. And the singer is unknown for a reason. [4]

Frank Wess

Frank Wess/Johnny Coles: *Two at the Top* (1983, Uptown -12) Wess plays alto sax and flute -- he was a Basie arranger in the 1950s and has had a long and memorable career, with a second peak period in the early 1990s and solid records as recent as this year's *Magic 101* (recorded in 2011); Coles plays trumpet, had a sharp album in 1963 that raised expectations then virtually nothing other than a well-regarded album the year before this date; both horns have nice spots but pianist Kenny Barron has the hottest solos. [Rhapsody doesn't include the 1988 radio shot that the 2012 reissue added as a second disc.] [7]

The Frank Wess-Harry Edison Orchestra: *Dear Mr. Basie* (1989, Concord) Basie's ghost band, five years after the great man's death, but further pumped up with alumni like Edison and Joe Newman. Five trumpets, four trombones, five saxophones, piano (Ronnel Bright), guitar (Ted Dunbar), bass (Eddie Jones), and drums (Gregg Field). Don't know any of the latter four, but they swing hard. The horn section is littered with stars. "Jumpin' at the Woodside" has rarely sounded better: the flair of the early band, and the glossy overkill of the late "atomic" band both in evidence. Powerful, intoxicating stuff. [9]

Frank Wess: *Live at the 1990 Concord Jazz Festival: Second Set* (1990, Concord -91) I file this under

Frank Wess, the first name listed on the back cover, as "leader, tenor saxophone, flute." The rest of the band: Marshal Royal (alto sax), Rick Wilkins (tenor sax), Pete Minger (fluehorn), Gerry Wiggins (piano), Lynn Seaton (bass, vocal), Harold Jones (drums). This time the songbook leans toward Ellington ("Lush Life," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Just Squeeze Me" -- the latter with Seaton's one vocal, a masterpiece of mumbling somewhere beyond Clark Terry and Moms Mabley). Really fine work. [+]

Bugge Wesseltoft

Bugge Wesseltoft: *New Conception of Jazz: Moving* (2001, Jazzland) Pianist, mostly Fender Rhodes and synths, introduced his "new conception" in 1997 and recycled the title four more times through 2004, this the middle entry; don't know if the earlier albums are this grooveful, and the last piece does tail off into simple figures, but the early ones were reminding me of Bohannon minus the fake strings, cleaner and a bit more abstract -- with jazz the dancefloor is in your mind. [8]

Randy Weston

Randy Weston: *Blue Moses* (1972, CTI/Masterworks Jazz -11) Started out in the late 1950s as a pianist out to explore new things, especially to connect back to Africa, with Morocco a special interest -- three of four titles here have African place names, the exception "Night in Medina" which moves even further afield. Probably this was Weston's first big band venture -- Don Sebesky is credited with the arrangements, but Weston periodically returned to the big band well, and you can taste the excitement here. While CTI's stars take up the solo slots -- Freddie Hubbard is brilliant, and even Hubert Laws' flutes fit in nicely -- the brass section packs quite some wallop. [9]

Michael White

Violinist, had an angle on world fusion when it first emerged in the early 1970s, recording five 1971-74 Impulse albums plus side shots with Pharoah Sanders and Alice Coltrane, but hasn't recorded much since.

Michael White: *Spirit Dance* (1972, Impulse) Scattered pieces assay Latin and African themes, the "Samba" dull and repetitive, but elsewhere the percussion works and the violin cuts harshly against the grain in what could be avant as well as exotic; "Praise Innocence" keys off an out-of-tune kiddie choir, but winds up with pianist Ed Kelly reinventing Dollar Brand. [6]

Michael White: *Pneuma* (1972, Impulse) The first side a five-part suite lost in space. Interest picks up on the second side along with the beat. [5]

Michael White: *The Land of Spirit and Light* (1973, Impulse -05) A clash of styles, with White's violin weaving between Bob King's guitar and Prince Lasha's woodwinds and various percussionists, achieving a form of world fusion rooted in no place in particular; it gets most interesting when Cecil McBee's bass picks up the groove and the odds and ends flow together. [6]

Dr. Michael White

Dr. Michael White: *New Year's at the Village Vanguard* (1992, Antilles) He's got a lively dixieland

band, and plays fine Johnny Dodds clarinet, while the guest trumpet superstar does what he does best. [+]

Paul Whiteman

Paul Whiteman: *Greatest Hits* (1920-28, Collector's Choice) The first time I heard of him I figured him for a joke; now I wonder whether at the time his audience even caught the irony. One of the biggest names of the Jazz Age, yet he bears little resemblance to any '20s jazz musician that we actually still listen to today, nor does he do much for his most famous singer, Bing Crosby (who sings on two cuts here, in what is mostly an instrumental album). But what we have here is rather carefully constructed big band music, with a dab of jazz coloring and a slight ambition toward classicism (only fully indulged in his famous Gershwin piece). Even in a world unswung by Count Basie, this hardly qualifies as hot, or even danceable, but in its middlebrow ambitions you can see that what made it popular wasn't that it was made by the white guy -- it was what white America naively aspired to. [5]

Wesla Whitfield

Wesla Whitfield: *With a Song in My Heart* (1999, HighNote) A full program of Rodgers and Hart, done as simply as possible with just piano and bass accompaniment. Some good stuff here, but some of it drags too. [5]

Barney Wilen

Barney Wilen: *Moshi Too: Unreleased Tapes Recorded in Africa, 1969-70* (1969-70, Sonorama -13) A marvelous tenor saxophonist, born 1937 in France, best known in the US for his late-1950s work on soundtracks led by Miles Davis and Art Blakey, but later he explored African music and played in a punk band and finally settled into being one of the finest ballad interpreters of his generation. These newly uncovered tapes come from his tour of Africa which led to his 1972 album *Moshi*. I don't have the latter to compare with, but these scattered tracks give you an indication of his range -- including a lovely 13:08 "Serenade for Africa" on soprano, followed by a piece of guitar feedback (probably what the notes refer to as an "acid-rock jam"). Sometimes the Africans participate, take over even, or they may just cheer or jeer from the sidelines. Also, the 21:08 "Black Locomotive" sounds like Miles Davis would a couple years later on. [9]

Baby Face Willette

Baby Face Willette: *Face to Face* (1961, Blue Note -07) Organ man, church schooled, natch, cut two albums in 1961 with guitarist Grant Green and drummer Ben Dixon, then for all intents and purposes disappeared; this one adds Fred Jackson on tenor sax, whose skill set is summed up in the title of his one album, *Hootin' 'N Tootin'*; still, it's hard not to enjoy their gutbucket soul jazz. [8]

Joe Williams

Joe Williams: *Jump for Joy* (1963, RCA/Legacy -13) The jazz crooner, as perfect an heir to Billy Eckstine as could be imagined, but his best work depends on superior bands like Count Basie's, so no

surprise he struggles to overcome this anonymous big band. [5]

Joe Williams: *At Newport '63* (1963, Bluebird -02) The original LP slipped three studio cuts into this live album; this reissue adds the original live cuts at a bonus. Actually, the studio cuts were jugged to recreate the live feel, with Williams' calling out his bandmates on "Some of This 'n' Some of That." [+]

Joe Williams: *Havin' a Good Time* (1965, Hyena) Smooth as silk and rich as honey, as usual; with Ben Webster to plush things up even more, and Junior Mance to keep the ball rolling. [+]

Mary Lou Williams

Mary Lou Williams: *Mary Lou's Mass* (1969-72, Smithsonian/Folkways -05) I find this unlistenable, which is a shame given how marvelous the few wordless pieces can be; written for choreographer Alvin Ailey, fragments whose drama is meant to be seen flounder like opera without the visual action, and the overbearing religiosity adds the dead weight of otherworldliness when the initial title, "Music for Peace," should do us more good in the here and now. [5]

Mary Lou Williams: *A Grand Night for Swingin'* (1976, High Note -08) Got her start playing church organ on her mama's lap. Turned pro at age 6, and hit the road at 12. Cut her first records at 17 in 1927, really making her mark in the 1930s as pianist-arranger for Andy Kirk's Kansas City big band, going on to write extended works like *The Zodiac Suite*. Picked up bebop almost as naturally as she took to swing, and after a long hiatus reappeared in the 1970s as the hippest old lady in the business. This is just a live set caught in Buffalo, her trio mostly playing covers, a nice showoff spot for drummer Roy Haynes, the title cut reprised. It's all dazzlingly alive, spirit-lifting -- maybe all that praying paid off. Ends with a bit of interview, you won't mind hearing more than once. [9]

Tony Williams

Tony Williams: *Life Time* (1964, Blue Note) Williams' first album, three cuts with Sam Rivers (tenor sax), and Richard Davis or Gary Peacock (bass); one with Bobby Hutcherson (vibes) and Herbie Hancock (piano); the last with Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter (bass). The pieces with Rivers can be viewed as a continuation (or prelude -- I think that's the way the dates line up) to Rivers' remarkable debut, *Fuscia Swing Song*, the lack of a pianist perhaps allowing Rivers to stray a bit more into the avant. The piece with Hutcherson is much more abstract, with Williams adding percussion -- wood block, maracas, triangle -- to complement the vibes/marimba. The finale even simpler. The different groupings leave one feeling a bit unfilled -- especially a thirst for more from Rivers -- but the pieces themselves are each fascinating. Williams was still a teenager when he cut this, which makes it all the more amazing. [9]

Tony Williams: *Spring* (1965, Blue Note -87) Front cover says Anthony Williams, but back cover and spine say Tony. All of the song credits are Anthony. The second cut is a 5:00 drum solo. Sam Rivers (tenor sax) and Gary Peacock (bass) play on all other cuts; Wayne Shorter (tenor sax) and Herbie Hancock (piano) play on three cuts each. Much like the previous album, yet something seems just a bit off -- I suspected Shorter at first, but according to the notes it's Rivers playing tenor sax on the somewhat wispy "Love Song," with little of his usual bite. [+]

Claude Williamson

Claude Williamson Trio: *'Round Midnight* (1956, Bethlehem -96) Piano trio, with Red Mitchell (bass) and Mel Lewis (drums). Another pianist in the bop chain, Williamson shows up mostly in the company of west coast (cool jazz) artists: Art Pepper, Gerry Mulligan, Barney Kessel, Tal Farlow, June Christy, Howard Rumsey, Bud Shank. These are all standards, many show tunes: "Stella by Starlight," "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," "Tea for Two," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Just One of Those Things," "The Song Is You," the title cut, etc. Good takes. Good rhythm section. You'd think there must be a million records like this, but I doubt that there's more than a few dozen anywhere near as good. [+]

Jack Wilson

Jack Wilson: *Easterly Winds* (1967, Blue Note -04) Hard bop, the three horns tending to blend together, with only Lee Morgan making much of an impression. But then it's the pianist's album. Reminds me of similar work by Duke Pearson and Horace Parlan, not to mention Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner. All of those guys recorded piano-based, horn-drenched hard bop albums for Blue Note in the '60s. Wilson is a good pianist, but doesn't quite have the distinctive touch of the others, and the horns make the distinctions even more marginal. Unless, that is, they carry the day, which here they don't. [5]

John Lee Wilson

John Lee Wilson: *Shout for Trane* (1976, Why Not -09) Church-schooled jazz singer from Oklahoma, moved to New York and into the most marginal of niches, singing agit-prop with avant-gardists like Archie Shepp; some of this is a conventional cross of Jon Hendricks and Leon Thomas, but the title shout is more primal, with Monty Waters reducing Coltrane to a screech. [7]

Matt Wilson

Matt Wilson: *Going Once, Going Twice* (1998, Palmetto) Quartet with two saxophonists (Andrew D'Angelo, Joel Frahm), bass and drums. Lee Konitz joins in on two cuts, which of course is a treat. Title song includes some auctioneer chat from Ned Sublette, plus Pete McCann on banjo. There are a lot of nifty things here. The opener, "Searchlight," gets an almost oriental thing out of the two reeds. D'Angelo's "Andrew's Ditty" is a bright, energetic, rocking showcase for the two saxophones. "Schoolboy Thug" rocks even harder, and rams the point home with a rap. A short, closing "Turn Turn Turn" is lovely and refreshing. [9]

Nancy Wilson

Nancy Wilson: *Live From Las Vegas* (1968, Capitol -05) What a classy singer! not a compliment -- she reaches so desperately sometimes you can hear her affecting a proper English accent; after all the drama, it's curious that she closes with "Black Is Beautiful" -- is she hedging her bets? or just playing her cards? [4]

Phil Wilson

Phil Wilson & Makoto Ozone: *Live!! At the Berklee Performance Center* (1982, Capri -10) Japanese piano prodigy, prodded, poked, teased and torn by grizzled trombone professor, crude and so much the better for it. [6]

Paul Winter

The Paul Winter Sextet: *Count Me In* (1962-63, Living Music -2CD -12) I have saxophonist Winter -- initially alto, but later more likely soprano -- filed under New Age, that loose agglomeration of non-swinging, non-rocking, only sometimes remotely folk-ish or world-ish or maybe even classical-ite instrumental music reputedly able to calm nerves and engender a sense of inner bliss. I have no idea whether he's any good at it: it's a category of music I actively ignore, to the extent that I expect the few good records I have filed there are misclassified. Turns out, Winter started as a Stan Kenton fan. He did a year in the army, then went to Northwestern, played in their big band, won a prize, got invited to the White House, wound up on a State Department tour of Latin America, where he got a jump on the jazz samba wave. Nice package, meticulously documented with a 32-page booklet, a cherished memory, no doubt, and a minor curiosity for the rest of us. [5]

Jimmy Witherspoon

Jazz Me Blues: The Best of Jimmy Witherspoon (1956-66, Prestige -98) Some impeccable jazz musicians here, including a couple of very sharp big bands. [+]

Jimmy Witherspoon: *Live at the 1972 Monterey Jazz Festival* (1959-72, MJF -08) The last of the Kansas City blues shouters, in a surly mood that could pass for spirit if you cut him some slack; his Jimmy Rushing tribute is heartfelt but not up to snuff; his praise for guitarist Robben Ford is earned but not such a big deal; the bonus track from 1959 towers above the later performance, not just because Messrs. Hines, Herman, Hawkins, Webster, and Eldridge are in the band, but they sure help. [5]

Ricky Woodard

Ricky Woodard: *The Silver Strut* (1995, Concord) Good player, good album; lots of that fast, precise bopswing that you can expect from your better mainstream post-Parker, post-McLean altoists. [+]

Phil Woods

The Phil Woods Quintet + One: *Flash* (1989, Concord) The first thing you hear is some fancy trumpet playing, which happens with astonishing regularity on albums featuring Tom Harrell. Still, most of this seems to be in some sort of orchestral limbo -- not bop nor swing, a sort of slick gloss that's neither here nor there. [5]

Reggie Workman

Reggie Workman Ensemble: *Images* (1989, Music & Arts -90) Crispell's most dependable bassist, leading an extended (and rather scattered) group live at the Knitting Factory: Don Byron (clarinet),

Michelle Navazio (guitar), Gerry Hemingway (drums), and Jeanne Lee (vocals) -- the latter's avant-scat is key, or the problem if you find it too annoying to follow. [5]

Reggie Workman Ensemble: *Altered Spaces* (1992, Leo -93) Violinist Jason Hwang joins, replacing the guitar and stabilizing the group that seems fated to the chamber jazz promised by the clarinet (Don Byron) and voice (Jeanne Lee), intercut with lots of bass solos. [5]

Frank Wright

Frank Wright: *Uhuru Na Umoja* (1970, Free America/Verve -05) Double-barrelled heavy blowing, with Noah Howard's alto sax reinforcing Wright's earthshaking tenor, the strategy little more than to knock you down and sweep you away in a tidal wave of high energy and unchecked spirit. [+]

Frank Wright: *Unity* (1974, ESP-Disk -06) If it weren't for ESP-Disk's "the artist alone decides what you hear" motto Wright might have passed in total obscurity. Who else would have approved the music he released on two ESP records from 1965-67? He was as rough a tenor saxophonist as the avant-garde produced in the '60s, closer in spirit to the future Charles Gayle than to his contemporary Albert Ayler. Since then an occasional live tape pops up, like Raphe Malik's *Last Set* (1984 [2004], Boxholder), and now this barnburner from the Moers Festival. The drummer dances and stings like his namesake, Muhammad Ali. Bobby Few's piano and Alan Silva's bass are cranked into overdrive, and Wright really brings the noise. Impulse used to call shit like this by guys like Shepp and Sanders "energy music," but even they would have reached for the plug before this finishes. [9]

Frank Wright Quartet: *Blues for Albert Ayler* (1974, ESP-Disk -12) Little recorded tenor saxophonist who died in 1990, his best known records two free improvs on ESP-Disk 1965-67 -- my interest in Wright was raised when Ken Vandermark dedicated a piece to him and followed that with a cover in *Free Jazz Classics*. This is dedicated to the late drummer Rashied Ali, but the real find here is some of James "Blood" Ulmer's earliest buzzsaw guitar work. Wright is also superb, a guy who could express a lot with few notes, an economy that may have suggested blues or Ayler but isn't bound to either. [9]

Larry Young

Larry Young: *Young Blues* (1960, Prestige/New Jazz/OJC -94) An early session (Young's second album), cut with relative unknowns on guitar-bass-drums. Young sticks closely to blues themes, including a taken on Horace Silver's "Nica's Dream." Young's organ dominates the proceedings, but guitarist Thornel Schwartz cuts loose with some nice Grant-Green-ish guitar, especially on "Nica's Dream." Simple formula, nice album. [+]

Larry Young: *Into Somethin'* (1964, Blue Note -98) Not exactly your average organ groove, but closer than usual. Not your average cacophonous Sam Rivers, either, but the moderate spicing helps. [+]

Larry Young: *Of Love and Peace* (1966, Blue Note -04) Young pushed the Hammond B-3 organ further than any other musician of his era, moving from his early blues albums into new thing territory. His masterpiece was *Unity*, cut in 1965 with an all-star lineup -- Woody Shaw, Joe Henderson, Elvin Jones -- that necessarily tied down all the loose edges. His follow-up had no such constraints: Jones was replaced by two no-name drummers, Henderson by two lesser saxophonists (his steady bandmate

George Morgan and the ubiquitous James Spaulding), while Shaw gave way to Eddie Gale, a fiery trumpeter then working with Cecil Taylor. The group pushed Young harder and farther than ever, and he responded with some of the most vigorous organ ever cut -- for three cuts, anyway. The fourth and final, a meditation on Islam called "Falaq," is slow and spacious. [9]

Larry Young: *Mother Ship* (1969, Blue Note -03) Jazz organ in the '60s rarely moved beyond the soul moves and boogaloo vamps that Jimmy Smith pioneered -- music that I'm quite happy with -- but Young went way beyond the pack, projecting the sort of power and intensity that fusion aimed for; this, his last Blue Note session, puts Young behind Herbert Morgan's thoughtful sax and Lee Morgan's cheery trumpet. [+]

Denny Zeitlin

Denny Zeitlin/Charlie Haden: *Time Remembers One Time Once* (1981, ECM -83) Piano/bass duo. Haden's bass takes a bit of volume to come out clearly, but is worthwhile, as is Zeitlin's piano. [+]

James Zitto

James Zitto: *Zitto* (1967, ESP-Disk -08) Percussionist, worked with Sonny Simmons, got a free shot on the label that bragged "the artist alone decide" and turned out an energetic but unexceptional free jazz blast, a sextet with Alan Praskin and Bert Wilson on noisy saxes and Warren Gale riffing high on trumpet. [5]

James Zollar

James Zollar: *Soaring With Bird* (1997, Naxos Jazz) He's a trumpet player from Kansas City. This is the only album under his name. I can't find out much about him, other than that he was in the Altman film *Kansas City* and has a list of sideman credits including: David Murray, Ed Jackson, Don Byron, Hamiet Bluiett, Bob Stewart, Cecil McBee, Nancie Banks, Sam Rivers, Tom Harrell, Hugh Ragin (Trumpet Ensemble), and Marty Ehrlich. The idea here is Charlie Parker songs (11 Parker originals, 2 covers). The core band is a quartet with Bill Cunliffe (piano), John Clayton (bass), Paul Kreibich (drums), plus guests on a few tracks: Pete Christlieb (tenor sax), Andy Martin (trombone), Ron Eschete (guitar). So it's not a big reach, but the same idea has been exploited by the likes of Roy Hargrove, and this is a lot more fun. "My Little Suede Shoes" is an especially delightful romp. [9]

John Zorn

John Zorn: *Filmworks: 1986-1990* (1986-90, Tzadik) Eclectic, of course. But in a sense, it's what he's really good at. [9]

Dekoboko Hajime/Yamantaka Eye: *Nani Nani* (1995, Tzadik) File under Zorn, John; shit you can get away with when you own your own record label. Just when you get sick of the exploding "toys" along comes 18:13 of one-note drone called "Bad Hawkwind." [1]

John Zorn/Wayne Horvitz/Elliott Sharp/Bobby Previte: *Downtown Lullaby* (1998, Depth of Field) Aside from a couple of screechdowns, this centers on the dense rhythmic drive of Sharp and Horvitz, with Zorn squawking on top. As is often the case with Zorn, when it works it is magnificent. And it

works just often enough to make you wonder why he don't keep doing it, or why someone else doesn't pick up where he leaves off. [+]

Groups

Aesop Quartet

Aesop Quartet: *Fables for a New Millennium* (1999, 8th Harmonic) Very little info on this one, but back cover says: "CW: Hamid, Ernest, Jeff, Rollo." Let's see: Hamid Drake (drums), Ernest Dawkins (reeds), Jeff Parker (guitar), Rollo Radford (electric bass). Drake is probably the best drummer to emerge in the last 10-20 years, and his work here is as sure-footed as we've come to expect. Dawkins is an AACM guy, plays with Kahil El'Zabar in the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble, leads the New Horizons Ensemble. Parker also plays in New Horizons. Radford has Sun Ra on his resume. The WPL copy I have is short on credits, but I understand that Reggie Gibson sings "Jamila's Song" and raps on "Graph-ti-fi-ca-tion," and Rob Swift does some turntable work. Dawkins is the leader -- at least he's credited with all of the songs. Parker does some exceptionally nice work here. Some rough edges, but this sounds like a tour de force to me. Also seems to be a one-shot, since Dawkins has moved on to New Horizons, and Drake is so in-demand that his group commitments are fraying all around. [9]

Air

Air: *Air Song* (1975, Why Not -09) You're going to be reading a lot more about Air when Mosaic comes out with a big box of the trio's Novus recordings, including the long-out-of-print landmark, *Air Lore* -- where the avant-garde revisited a deep tradition including Scott Joplin and Jelly Roll Morton. This early effort is another belated reissue, even if only a taste of what was to come. The title song floats amiably on Henry Threadgill's flute, with minimal input from bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Steve McCall. The other three 10-minute pieces are more conventionally intense, with Hopkins aggressively attacking Threadgill's weaving alto sax patterns. [8]

Air: *80 Degrees Below '82* (1982, Antilles) Carries on smartly from *Air Lore*, which was the avant-garde's sturdiest meditation on jazz's deep roots. This one adds another Jelly Roll Morton tune, plus three Henry Threadgill originals. Smart and precise. [9]

Amalgam

Amalgam: *Prayer for Peace* (1969, FMR -02) A classic from the early days of the English avant-garde, more due to how tightly it holds together than to the considerable risks the group takes; the sound has amazing presence -- the bass literally hugs you, while the drums ping off your bones and Trevor Watts' alto sax cuts straight to your heart; and when they shift from the dirge-like intro to full metal screech the earth moves. [10]

The Andrews Sisters

The Andrews Sisters: *Capitol Collectors Series* (1956-58, Capitol) They're among the most indelible voices of popular music in the 1940s. But this collection comes too late -- remakes of old hits and more contemporary material, which starts strong with "Crazy Arms" but trails off severely toward the end. [5]

Art Ensemble of Chicago

Art Ensemble of Chicago: *A Jackson in Your House/Message to Our Folks/Reese and the Smooth Ones* (1969, Snapper -2CD -12) Lester Bowie on trumpet, Joseph Jarman and Roscoe Mitchell on reeds, Malachi Favors on bass, everyone doubling up on all manner of percussion, the purveyors of Great Black Music spread themselves thin in 1969 by laying it on thick: this useful reissue collects three of more than a dozen albums they released in that watershed year. The preach and jive hasn't worn well, and the doodling can strain your patience. But there are times, like the ultra-bent funk on "Rock Out," where they astonish -- and there's something to be said for the fertile history. [8]

Art Ensemble of Chicago: *Tutankhamun* (1969, Black Lion) The usual bits and pieces -- pungent trumpet, slippery reeds, confusing verbal hoodoo, everyone winging it on percussion. [6]

Art Ensemble of Chicago: *AEC With Fontella Bass* (1970, Free America/Verve -05) The gospel singer was meant to pump up the Great Black Music collective with the fear of God; her appearance does indeed hit hard at the start, but soon enough the group's usual Africanized black power moves take over, the music's odd tangents dominating. [+]

Art Ensemble of Chicago: *Certain Blacks* (1970, Free America/Verve -05) Chicago Beau crashes the party as Exhibit A to "Certain Blacks (Do What They Wanna)" and throws the gang off their game; but they bounce right back with an 11:38 Sonny Boy Williamson jam. [5]

Art Ensemble of Chicago: *Phase One* (1971, Free America/Verve -05) Just the five of them, each credited with multiple instruments as well as "etc." -- a lot of percussion gadgetry, but more importantly a sense of limitlessness; both pieces start slow and fart around before ultimately climaxing as the Great Black Music they advertised. [9]

Asian American Jazz Orchestra

See Anthony Brown.

Available Jelly

Available Jelly: *Happy Camp* (1996, Ramboy) On Michael Moore's label, this particular group includes four horns (two reeds, two brass), bass and drums. The horns combine in often wondrous ways, albeit with a few rough spots. [+]

Ballin' the Jack

Ballin' the Jack: *Jungle* (1999, Knitting Factory) Downtown types play Ellington, with a couple of ringers by Charlie Shavers and Herschel Evans, and they have a ball doing it. [9]

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy (1998, Coolsville/Capitol). AMG sez file this under rock, but it sounds like jazz, and like it's supposed to sound like jazz, even if one has doubts about the process. Pop jazz, of course, goes back to the early days of jazz, but retro only becomes possible once the past is past. BS&T and Chicago weren't really far enough removed from their referents to be retro, but these

guys, Royal Crown Revue, the Squirrel Nut Zippers, etc., are. But it's a tricky thing to do, especially with the race traps not fully buried in the past. Kid Creole is smart about that; so is Sex Mob, but I have some doubts about these guys, especially when they slum out "Minnie the Moocher." On the other hand, "Mambo Swing" is pretty enjoyable. "So Long Farewell Goodbye" is a slight concept, corny in its execution, but the touches of N.O. polyphony and boogie piano liven it up. The whole album is over the top, so maybe irony lurks somewhere. Hard to say. [5]

The Brecker Brothers

The Brecker Brothers: *Return of the Brecker Brothers* (1992, Verve -08) Michael on sax, Randy on trumpet, had a run on Arista 1975-81 -- *Heavy Metal Be-Bop* was a concept title -- then regrouped for this funk slice; the horns aren't bad, the beats so so, the vocals a mistake, as is slowing it down. [5]

Catalyst

Catalyst: *The Complete Recordings, Vol. 1* (1972, Porter -10) Philadelphia jazz-funk group, cut four albums in the early 1970s, now reissued for the second time -- in 1999 Joel Dorn's 32 Jazz label collected all four on two discs released as *The Funkiest Band You Never Heard*. Porter decided to sell its otherwise equivalent two discs as separate packages, so this one packages the first two LPs, *Catalyst* and *Perception*, while *Vol. 2* gets the latter two. The dominant sound here is the electric piano of Eddie Green, who does a fine job of picking up where Jimmy Smith's organ left off, while protean saxophonist Odean Pope plays gutbucket blues channeled through the holy spirits of Coltrane and Ayler. [8]

Catalyst: *The Complete Recordings, Vol. 2* (1974-75, Porter -10) The final two albums of Philadelphia's unknown funk-jazz quartet, with drummer Sherman Ferguson more prominent, saxophonist Odean Pope more schizo -- a powerhouse on tenor sax, but what's with all the flute? -- and electric pianist Eddie Green running out of steam. The two halves split bad: *Unity* is in some ways their peak, but on *A Tear and a Smile* -- their first album with a chick instead of the four-Afro band on the cover -- the funk fades into la-la exotica, with not just flutes but strings and vocals. [5]

Chicago Underground

Chicago Underground Trio: *Possible Cube* (1998, Delmark) I count four players in this trio, although Jeff Parker may just be a guest. There seem to be dozens, maybe hundreds, of records similar to this: mild-mannered avant-gardism, full of nice little bits and special effects, even if they never quite add up to something you can remember. [5]

Clusone 3

Clusone 3: *Love Henry* (1996, Gramavision -97) Pretty low key as their work goes, but nobody sounds better relaxed than Michael Moore. [+]

The Contemporary Jazz Quintet

The Contemporary Jazz Quintet: *Actions* (1966-67, Atavistic -05) One of the earliest prime

examples of new thing in Europe, influenced by Ayler but with Hugh Steinmetz's trumpet piled thick on top of Franz Beckerlee's alto sax it is denser and richly brassy. [+]

Coon-Sanders Nighthawks

Coon-Sanders' Original Nighthawk Orchestra: *Volume Three* (1928-29, Old Masters -98) This is the only one I've heard of this admirable 4-volume archival effort. The Coon-Sanders Nighthawks played in Chicago from 1921-32. This was a white danceband built around drummer Carleton Coon and pianist Joe Sanders. (Don't know if Coon, who died in 1932, was any relation to the infamous anthropologist of the same name, who nowadays is regarded as the perhaps the last significant figure to try to spin a web of science around simplistic race studies.) Still, these are interesting recordings. They have a decided archaic feel to them -- pre-swing, not really dixieland either, they sort of fit into what we now think of as the pseudo-jazz of the Jazz Age -- music hall vaudeville with a little spritz, less pretentious than, say, Paul Whiteman, and more fun too. [+]

The Crown Royals

The Crown Royals: *All Night Burner* (1995-97, Estrus) This is the first of two records by a funk instrumental quartet that featured Ken Vandermark on tenor sax. The other band members are: Jeff BBQ (drums), Mark Blade (bass), Pete Nathan (guitar). [5]

The Crown Royals: *Funky-Do* (1998, Estrus -99) The second (and last) album with this quartet. This immediately sounds sharper, like the band has gotten their shit together. It's also a bit more varied, able to slow down a bit and keep their balance. [+]

The Crusaders

The Jazz Crusaders: *At the Lighthouse/Pacific Jazz Records* (1962, Blue Note -06) Early on they were a hard bop band that recalled pre-bop for its high spirits -- Wayne Henderson's trombone tailgated Kid Ory and Trummy Young, Joe Sample's piano showed a flair for boogie woogie. [7]

The Jazz Crusaders: *Old Socks, New Shoes . . . New Socks, Old Shoes* (1970, Verve -08) Group's last album before dropping "Jazz" from their name, starts with an irresistible Sly Stone concoction, which they can't repeat let alone supersede; on the other hand, their regular funk fare makes better use of the evident leader's trombone. [5]

The Crusaders: *Pass the Plate* (1971, Verve -08) First album after dropping Jazz from their name, jazz having already become rather negligible in their pop-funk evolution; first side is a medley, the second short boogie pieces from Joe Sample, neither making a lot of sense. [4]

The Crusaders: *Images* (1978, Blue Thumb -09) Several albums down the line, the loss of Wayne Henderson cuts way back on the brass quotient; that cleans up the space for Wilton Felder's soul sax, but when he lays out you notice that Joe Sample has lost his boogie and the residual grooves are a little light. [5]

Close Erase

Close Erase (1995, Nor CD -96) Piano trio, with Per Oddvar Johansen on drums and future ECM regular Christian Wallumrød on piano. Flaten jumps right in and keeps the bass in the center of the flow, the piano responding as sharper and more oblique. [8]

Close Erase: No. 2 (1998, Nor CD -99) Flaten wrote two songs, and drummer Per Oddvar Johansen three, but this piano trio set is more characteristic of Christian Wallumrød than the group's debut. Piano out front, featuring tight melodic lines, with the bass and drums falling neatly into the new order. [7]

Curlew

Curlew: 1st Album/Live at CBGB 1980 (1980-81, DMG/ARC 2CD -08) George Cartwright's avant-fusion group in early creative ekstasis, to borrow a word guitarist Nicky Skopelitis later used to name his own group, pairing a debut album plus bonus tracks with a live shot with Denardo Coleman commandeering the drumkit. The rock element bounces off New York No Wave in a way that radicalizes the jazz element, so Cartwright's sax wails more tunefully than Lydia Lunch, and funk rhythms are free for the taking. [9]

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band: Jazz Moods: Hot (1987-92, Columbia/Legacy -05) Credits would help here, especially as they like to sneak guests in the back door. Kirk Joseph's sousaphone is their link to old New Orleans, but they try hard to be progressive, including "Moose the Mooche" (Charlie Parker) and "Eyomzi" (Johnny Dyani) in their repertoire, with a result that's neither here nor there. [5]

Element

Element (1996, Turn Left Production) Sax-piano-bass-drums quartet, with Gisle Johansen on soprano and tenor, backed by the Wiik/Flaten/Nilssen-Love rhythm section; Wiik makes a strong impression here, with solid comping and some flash in his solos, and Johansen is always pushing and prodding -- wonder why he hasn't had more of a career? [8]

Element: Shaman (1998, BP -99) Sextet, adds two more front-line horns -- Petter Wettene (saxes) and Vidar Johansen (bass clarinet) -- to Gisle Johansen's sax quartet, adding harmonics and depth without thrashing or dimming the free jazz feistiness; pianist Wiik helps steady the group, but his solos are more conventionally melodic. [8]

Emergency

Emergency: Homage to Peace (1970, Free America/Verve -05) Pianist Takashi Kako gets a rare quiet spot on "Kako Tune." Otherwise he pounds chords to keep up with Glenn Spearman's saxophone squall and Boulou Ferret's Hendrix-inspired electric guitar. [+]

Ethnic Heritage Ensemble

See Kahil El'Zabar.

Globe Unity Orchestra

Globe Unity Orchestra: *Globe Unity 73: Live in Wuppertal* (1973, FMP) Alexander von Schlippenbach's pathbreaking free jazz orchestra, ten horns -- counting Peter Kowald's tuba -- plus piano, bass and drums; I might be happier had they explored "Wolverine Blues" further -- their trad jazz deconstruction anticipated Air -- or if they dabbled more in recognizable forms, like their idea of a "Bavarian Calypso" or the march "Solidaritätslied," but there's no energy crunch here: their full bore cacophony -- Schlippenbach and Kowald are credited with "conduction," more like artillery guidance, as the "Maniacs" finale brings down the house. [9]

Globe Unity Orchestra & the Choir of the NDR-Broadcast: *Hamburg '74* (1974, Atavistic -04) The tight discipline of the choir is poignantly absurd in the midst of all these anarchist horns, where the idea of bringing down the house is more like blowing it up. [5]

Globe Unity Special '75: *Rumbling* (1975, FMP -91) Alexander von Schlippenbach's avant-orchestra, formed back around 1967, cut down to an octet here (plus a dog, unnamed in the credits) -- Steve Lacy, Evan Parker, and Gerd Dudek on reeds; Kenny Wheeler and Albert Mangelsdorff on brass; Peter Kowald and Paul Lovens rounding out the rhythm section; starts with a Misha Mengelberg march, portending mischief, and ends with Lacy on Monk; in between abstract sounds improbably colliding for something more than noise. [8]

The Group

The Group: *Live* (1986, NoBusiness -12) The name, even with its definite article, doesn't do them justice. They came out of the New York loft scene, gigged around for a couple years, and left nothing but this newly discovered masterpiece. The booklet shows two quintet posters: their May 3 (1986?) "world premier" with Ahmed Abdullah (trumpet), Marion Brown (alto sax), Billy Bang (violin), Sirone (bass), and Andrew Cyrille; and another from Sept. 12-13, 1986, with Fred Hopkins on bass. This recording, from Sept. 13, uses both bassists. They play five pieces, with Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" and Brown's "La Piacita" running 18 minutes each, and Miriam Makeba's "Amanpondo" at 25 minutes. Bang manages to swing in any or no time; the two horns mesh intuitively, completing each other's thoughts; the two bassists have different strong suits, and Cyrille has rarely had a better day. [9]

Harlem Hamfats

Harlem Hamfats: *Hamfat Swing 1936-1938* (1936-38, EPM) Only the name comes from Harlem: this fine small swing group came together in Chicago, with roots in New Orleans jazz and Mississippi blues. The later cuts backing vocalists Rosetta Howard and Johnny Temple tail off a bit, but the early cuts swing magnificently, and "Let's Get Drunk and Truck" sticks in your mind. [9]

Hasidic New Wave

Hasidic New Wave: *Jews and the Abstract Truth* (1997, Knitting Factory Works) AMG files this under "Electronic / Avant-Garde / Minimalist." I'm putting it under "Klezmer" because of its exclamatory Jewish identification, but the main movers in the group -- Frank London (trumpet, keys), Greg Wall (sax), and David Fiuczynski (guitar) are reputable jazz musicians, and their individual work

(often explicitly Jewish oriented, as in Wall's remarkable *Later Prophets*) I file under jazz. This is really a jazz record as well, the bits of traditional Jewish music stretched and twisted by the improvisers. No reason this shouldn't work as well as any other folk-based jazz improv, but I find that I keep expecting it to catch fire and it never does. [5]

Hasidic New Wave: *Live in Cracow* (1998, Not Two) American klezmer group focused on pushing the folk music forward both as jazz and as rock, as something wilder and weirder than its prototype; with Frank London (trumpet), Greg Wall (sax), David Fiuczynski (guitar), Fima Ephron (bass), and Aaron Alexander (drums). [8]

ICP Orchestra

ICP-Tentet: *In Berlin* (1977, FMP -79) Stands for Instant Composers Pool, the Tentet later renamed Orchestra, still extant thirty-some years later, still led by pianist Misha Mengelberg and drummer Han Bennink with cellist Tristan Honsinger the only other name still in the group; the horns are delirious in unison, rooted in old European pop, but they can also clash violently -- this was, after all, the group's enfant terrible phase. [7]

Interzone

Interzone: *Crossing Atlas 45°* (1998, Not Two) Piano trio featuring Mircea Tiberian (b. 1955 in Romania), with Horst Nonnemacher (bass) and Maurice De Martin (drums); postbop, plays nice without many rough edges, possibly before the label developed its avant taste. [6]

Italian Instabile Orchestra

Italian Instabile Orchestra: *Skies of Europe* (1994, ECM -95) Eighteen-piece avant big band, founded in 1991, featuring some of Italy's best known musicians -- Pino Minafra, Mario Schiano, Gianluigi Trovesi, Carl Actis Dato, Giorgio Gaslini among them; two extended suites, dense, many strong passages, some meandering. [7]

The Jazz Crusaders

See The Crusaders.

Jazzanova

Jazzanova: *Blue Note Trip* (1949-75, Blue Note -2CD -05) The mixes don't change the original sources much, so this is almost an oldies compilation, selected by DJs according to DJ logic. This suggests two review approaches: one for its historical (i.e., educational) value, the other utilitarian. In either case, the mix favors early '70s Mizell Brothers fusion material -- i.e., the stuff they put out on their way down after Alfred Lion retired and the founders faded. Then the next layer back comes from hard boppers, especially Horace Silver. Finally, there are a few oddities -- Sam Rivers, Sheila Jordan, Charlie Rouse, the most interesting stuff here. But overall it looks too random for historians, if not for history. Utility is harder to gauge, but it doesn't do much for me. [4]

The J.B.'s

The J.B.'s & Fred Wesley: *The Lost Album* (1972, Hip-O Select -11) James Brown's band taking it easy under the direction of Fred Wesley, whose trombone leads get their fair share of time; the instrumentals don't go the extra mile they need to, but a couple of vocal slots grease the skids, even if it's just jive. [6]

The Jones Brothers

See Hank Jones.

The Leaders

The Leaders Trio: *Heaven Dance* (1988, Sunnyside) The Leaders was an impressive group assembled in 1986 with Arthur Blythe, Chico Freeman, and Lester Bowie on the front line. This was a peak period for Blythe, and he had spent much of the '80s working closely with Freeman. The rhythm section was also superb: Kirk Lightsey, Cecil McBee, and Famadou Don Moye, with Lightsey switching to flute on the last song -- where his Pied Piper bit is a lot more inspired than most of the slumming saxophonists I can think of. Still, this mostly boils down to a Lightsey piano trio, which is fine as always. [+]

Liquid Soul

Liquid Soul (1996, Ark 21) Acid jazz band, founded by Mars Williams (Chicago-based saxophonist, previously in Hal Russell's NRG Ensemble and in the Vandermark 5), with DJ Jesse De La Pena on turntables, and the balance is more/less a jazz band: trumpet/flugerhorn, keyboards, drums, guitar, bass. As a jazz band they don't have much going their way: the brass is loud, the beats regular, their takes on standards (Coltrane's "Equinox" and Shorter's "Footprints") neither here nor there. The raps, the turntablism, the effects are a bit more interesting. [4]

Los Angeles Jazz Quartet

Los Angeles Jazz Quartet: *Family Song* (1998, Not Two) Bassist Darek Oleszkiewicz, b. 1963 in Wroclaw, moved to Los Angeles in 1988 and recorded with various ensembles named for his adopted home, before eventually truncating his last name to Oles; with Chuck Manning on tenor/soprano sax, Kevin Tullis on drums, and especially the very fluid guitar of Larry Koonse for a cool take on postbop. [7]

The McGuire Sisters

The McGuire Sisters: *The Anthology* (1952-65, MCA -2CD -99) Back catalog work, a name I remember as before my time even when I was a child -- even though half of these cuts date from late enough that I could've heard them new. Part of this is because nearly everything they did was retreaded -- in the '50s they specialized in '30s songs, plus the occasional cover like their #1 "Sincerely" (written by Harvey Fuqua of the Moonglows, co-credited to Alan Freed of payola fame). Still, the surprise is not just that this this flirts with gorgeous, it's jazzier than I would've imagined. Some of it, anyway. [5]

Medeski, Martin & Wood

See John Medeski.

Melodic Art-Tet

Melodic Art-Tet (1974, No Business -13) Quartet, originally formed in 1970 by saxophonist Charles Brackeen and three members of Sun Ra's entourage: Ahmed Abdullah (trumpet), Ronnie Boykins (bass), and Roger Blank (drums). They played in lofts, never released an album, but cut this at WKCR in 1974, with a very young William Parker taking over the bass slot, and Tony Waters on percussion. Four pieces (17, 20, 30, 12 minutes), free with funk overtones, the reeds -- flute and soprano as well as tenor sax -- not as clear as you'd like, but Abdullah turns into a force of nature, and the second half is so ship-shape you could sail to Saturn. [9]

Memphis Nighthawks

Memphis Nighthawks: *Jazz Lips* (1976-77, Delmark -09) University of Illinois students formed a trad jazz group, recycling the name of an obscure 1920s group, cut an long-forgotten album for a Chicago label, and disbanded; in some ways this is like every other trad jazz revival project, but the horn layering -- clarinet, trumpet, trombone, bass sax -- is subtle and powerful, and the guitar-drums rhythm cooks. [8]

The Mills Brothers

The Best of the Mills Brothers [20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection] (1941-67), MCA -00) Started recording in 1931, described as "four boys and a guitar," noted for their vocal mimic of brass horns; they were very successful in the early 1930s (17 top-ten singles), but this doesn't pick them up until they moved to Decca in 1941 and landed a number one with "Paper Doll"; their last big hit was "The Glow-Worm" in 1952, by which time they were using real bands and getting a looser pop sound that depended less on their harmonizing. [8]

Modern Jazz Quartet

The Modern Jazz Quartet: *Django* (1953-55, Prestige/OJC) Pleasant, swinging chamber jazz, led by the precise, thoughtful piano of John Lewis, accented by Milt Jackson's vibes. [+]

The Modern Jazz Quartet at Music Inn, Volume 2: Guest Artist: Sonny Rollins (1958, Atlantic) Pretty much what you'd figure: the usual polite chamber jazz, which the guest artist towers over like the saxophone colossus he is. [+]

The Modern Jazz Quartet With Laurindo Almeida: *Collaboration* (1964, Label M -01) The problem with Brazilian music is that's it's too nice. So what happens when you match the nicest guitarist in Brazil (probably the world) with the most polite and proper jazz group in the U.S.? For starters, you can barely hear anything going on. On close examination, John Lewis has a lot to say, and this starts to develop a sinuous coherence. But I still find it too nice, too subtle; just not enough there. [4]

The Modern Jazz Quartet: *Under the Jasmin Tree/Space* (1967-69, Capitol -10) Apple records only foray into jazz was to release these two short LPs which now fit smartly onto a single disc; MJQ played elegant chamber bebop, Milt Jackson vibes swinging over John Lewis piano, nothing to distinguish this from their other records except a little more jangle in the rhythm section. [5]

Modern Jazz Quartet: *Topsy: This One's for Basie* (1985, Pablo/OJC -02) When Norman Granz launched his Pablo label, he recruited heavily among the by-then-old acts who worked with him on his earlier labels (Verve, Norgran, etc.). Chief among those was Count Basie, who showed that there was an afterlife beyond his old and new testament bands. Basie cut a couple of delightful albums with Milt Jackson, so when Granz coaxed the Modern Jazz Quartet out of their retirement, they may have had Basie on their minds. This is still John Lewis' group -- he wrote most of the songs, and his dapper piano dominates. But the whole group plays even lighter and more nimbly than usual, as if thinking of Basie compels them to dance. [+]

The Music Ensemble

The Music Ensemble (1974-75, Roratorio -01) An early group for William Parker, with Roger Baird (percussion), Billy Bang (violin), Malik Baraka (trumpet), Daniel Carter (tenor/alto sax), and Herb Kahn (bass); the first cut has violin with percussion, rather pretty; the second uses trumpet and possibly alto sax, again with a sort of glass-tinkly percussion; hard to judge. [5]

New York Art Quartet

New York Art Quartet (1964, ESP-Disk -08) One-shot avant-garde group, at least until they reunited for a *35th Reunion* record, but an important item in trombonist Roswell Rudd's discography -- he dominates the rough interplay with alto saxophonist John Tchicai, while percussionist Milford Graves is at least as sparkling; the sole artiness is the cut that frames a poem, but it too is a signpost of the times, "Black Dada Nihilismus," by Amiri Baraka. [9]

New York Art Quartet: *Old Stuff* (1965, Cuneiform -10) Short-lived group, long remembered. Danish alto saxophonist John Tchicai teamed with trombonist Roswell Rudd to cut two 1964-65 albums, an eponymous one on ESP-Disk that has remained in print more often than not, and a second that soon vanished, leaving us with nothing more until the pair got together in 1999 and cut *35th Reunion*. These radio shots add significantly to their legacy, another 70 minutes (compared to 43 on the first album). The bass and drums slots were variable: Finn von Eyben plays bass here, and Louis Moholo drums. Rudd was working out the logic of free jazz trombone, and Tchicai lets him run with it, filling in and edging around. [9]

New York Art Quartet: *Call It Art* (1964-65, Triple Point -5LP) Extravagant packaging, with the 5 LPs each in its own jacket, packed alongside a 156-page clothbound book, both enclosed in a very handsome plywood box. The group, with Roswell Rudd on trombone and John Tchicai on alto sax, was more at home in Copenhagen than in New York. They cut the one album they're known for on ESP-Disk, another for Fontana in England, but other recordings have leaked out over the years -- notably *Old Stuff*, released by Cuneiform in 2010, and now this stack of "previously uncirculated" vinyl. Hard for me to evaluate -- among other things I'm no longer accustomed to evaluating things in 15-20 minute chunks -- but everything I play has its fascinating points. Retail at \$340 (plus shipping), which I regard as insane. But it is quite a piece of product, and presumably the market knows best. [9]

NRG Ensemble

NRG Ensemble: *Calling All Mothers* (1993, Quinnah) Hal Russell died in 1992, leaving this band without its leader. He was a free jazz renaissance man -- much revered by many, but thus far a complete mystery to me. The band as constituted at this point was: Mars Williams (tenor/alto/soprano sax), Ken Vandermark (tenor sax, clarinet, bass clarinet), Brian Sandstrom (guitar, trumpet, bass), Kent Kessler (bass, bass guitar, didgeridoo), Steve Hunt (drums, vibraphone, marimba, didgeridoo). This group went on to produce two more albums: *This Is My House* (1996, Delmark) and *Bejazzo Gets a Facelift* (1998, Atavistic). [+]

Orange Trane

Orange Trane: *My Personal Friend* (1998, Not Two) Polish group, only album, no names here I recognize (Dariusz Herbasz, Slawomir Jaskulke, Piotr Lemanczyk, Tomasz Losowski, plus guests, including accordion on two tracks); postbop, a bit on the lush side but flows nicely. [6]

Oregon

Oregon: *Winter Light* (1974, Vanguard) Interesting group: everyone doubles up on instruments, giving them a wide palette of sounds, and various options for percussion without a real drummer. Wind instruments tend to be soft (oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, French horn), while the strings (Collin Walcott: tabla, sitar, dulcimer; Glen Moore: bass; Ralph Towner: guitar) fill out. [+]

Other Dimensions in Music

See William Parker.

Pago Libre

Pago Libre: *Wake Up Call: Live in Italy* (1997, Leo -99) Group with John Wolf Brennan (piano), Tacho Theissing (violin), Arkady Shilkloper (french horn, flugelhorn), Daniele Patumi (bass). I list Brennan first because he's the one name I recognize: he has been featured glowingly in the Penguin Guide, and Pago Libre albums were originally listed there under his name. The group goes back to 1990 and has six albums thus far. But Theissing deserves lead credit: presumably it's him doing the high-pitched plucking that surprises so in "Toccattacca" -- and he's all over the record. Shilkloper is a trip too, especially as he tops off "Kabak" after a long rhythmic run-up. Brennan mostly comps, but without a drummer that means he mostly drives, and this has some muscle to it. [9]

Paris Washboard

Paris Washboard: *Love for Sale* (1996, Stomp Off) Four piece trad jazz band from France, with trombone and clarinet for horns, barrelhouse piano, and washboard for percussion. Sometimes they add a tuba, but this "10ème anniversaire" album is just the four of them. It's really quite a combination: the trombone carries much of the weight, and also provides the brass tones; the contrast to the clarinet is about as straightforward as can be; the piano provides a change of location (I started to write pace, but

the pace here is uniformly pretty fast); and the washboard adds an air of trashiness to the whole thing. Probably too long (73:32), but it never flags. [9]

Preservation Hall Jazz Band

Preservation Hall Jazz Band: *New Orleans, Vol. II* (1981, CBS -82) Trad jazz group from New Orleans, where they no doubt served an important tourist function. AMG rates their first as a five-star classic, then disparages this one. I haven't heard the first one, so I'm tempted to go cautious on this one. Key player is trumpeter/vocalist Percy Humphrey. The songs are old, tried and true. The rhythm a bit clunky. [5]

Ramp

Ramp: *Come Into Knowledge* (1977, Blue Thumb -07) Roy Ayers discovery from Cincinnati -- name is an acronym for Roy Ayers Music Productions -- with a one-shot disco album, with neither a distinctive singer nor a dancefloor commanding beat; the best songs remind me of better disco groups, and they're not all that good. [4]

Return to Forever

See Chick Corea.

Revolutionary Ensemble

Revolutionary Ensemble: *Vietnam* (1972, ESP-Disk -09) Leroy Jenkins single-handedly invented a new path for violin in avant-jazz, scratched raw, searching the ins and outs of the fractured rhythmic support of comrades Sirone and Cooper. [7]

Revolutionary Ensemble: *The Psyche* (1975, Mutable Music -04) Avant-jazz trio, with Leroy Jenkins, the great free jazz violin pioneer, plus Sirone on bass and Jerome Cooper on drums, in one of the few obscure albums from their initial 1972-77 run -- possibly the best, although I'm a little confused by a bit of piano. [9]

SAN

See Zim Ngqawana.

Sounds of Liberation

Sounds of Liberation (1972, Porter -10) Philadelphia group, very much of the black power moment when shards of avant-sax clashed with funky conga rhythms, merging into something far out but not inaccessible; Byard Lancaster is the saxophonist in a septet with guitar, bass, and four percussionists counting vibraphonist Khan Jamal, the founder and best known member of the one-album group. [9]

The Source

The Source: *Olemanns Kornett* (1994, Curling Legs) Norwegian saxophonist Trygve Seim's group, both its/his first outing and Flaten's. Øyvind Broekke's trombone provides contrast, and the two in sync are a fun combo, both joyous and comic, while their dicing fractures the free jazz space. [7]

Motorpsycho, the Source & Deathprod: *Roadwork Vol. 2: The Motor Source Massacre: Live at Konigsberg Jazz Festival 1995* (1995, Stickman -00) Motorpsycho is a Norwegian metal band (named for the Russ Meyer movie), prolific since 1990 including four *Roadwork* volumes; The Source was saxophonist Trygve Seim's group, including Flaten at the time; Deathprod is Helge Sten, credited with theremin and "audio virus" here, later a regular with the band. Playing for a jazz crowd, the rock group plays long vamps the jazzers can improv on; the 22:06 "The Wheel" sounds something like Ornette Coleman over Neil Young if neither star shorted out (or maybe the young John Surman over Flipper with a side of Krautrock). [8]

Starship Beer

Starship Beer: *Nut Music: As Free as the Squirrels* (1976-88, Atavistic -01) Kevin Whitehead's clarinet solo on "Criminal Girlfriend" is free jazz weird, but a curve after they started off with post-Stooges verbal chop suey, something about Black/White or vice versa; not easy to classify, but just when you think improvised hardcore comes close they scat or break out the whistles or sing c&w through a defective CB. [4]

Steelwool Trio

See Ken Vandermark.

Strata Institute

Strata Institute: *Cipher Syntax* (1988, JMT -89) Steve Coleman/Greg Osby group, with electric guitar. Sort of a disjointed fusion funk thang. The full band strikes me as excessively slinky -- mostly a sound that I don't much care for, although the skewed beat also figures into that. But a cut with just the two horns seems to work fine. [5]

String Trio of New York

String Trio of New York: *First String* (1979, Black Saint) First recording by long-time group, at this point consisting of Billy Bang (violin), James Emery (guitar), John Lindberg (bass). Three pieces timed for LP: "The East Side Suite" (Lindberg, 19:55) for the first side; "Subway Ride With Giuseppe Logan" (Bang, 8:00) and "Catharsis in Real Time" (Emery, 9:03) for the second. This strikes me as still exploratory: lots of little interactions more interesting in their details than in some big picture. [+]

String Trio of New York: *Area Code 212* (1980, Black Saint -81) Long before anyone spoke of "chamber jazz" a pioneering configuration, with violin (Billy Bang), guitar (James Emery), and bass (John Lindberg), all three contributing songs and balancing off their efforts; Emery has the toughest time, sometimes suggesting bits of Spanish classical, but the record picks up steam when Bang takes charge. [6]

String Trio of New York: *Common Goal* (1981, Black Saint -82) Emery's guitar stands apart, struck into distinct notes or chords where the violin and bass are mostly arco, but this time that often works as percussion; besides, Bang and Lindberg work up more of a lather, even when Bang interjects some flute on "San San Nana" -- their intensity sweeps all before it; and they look like such nice guys on the cover. [8]

String Trio of New York: *Rebirth of a Feeling* (1983, Black Saint -84) Seems like pretty close to their average album, with Lindberg's bass stout and central, Bang's violin whirling around the periphery, and Emery's guitar poking holes here and there; Emery appears on the cover with a small guitar, credit says soprano guitar. [7]

String Trio of New York: *Natural Balance* (1986, Black Saint -87) Bang's fifth and last album with the group -- Lindberg and Emery carried on with 13 more albums up through 2008, using in series a veritable pantheon of violinists: Charles Burnham, Regina Carter, Diane Monroe, Rob Thomas; Emery's "Texas Koto Blues" is the most striking thing here, both before and after Bang enters; first record so far where I felt Emery was key, not much else stands out. [6]

Tethered Moon

See Masabumi Kikuchi.

The Trio

See John Surman.

Tripleplay

See Ken Vandermark.

US3

US3: *Hand on the Torch* (1993, Blue Note) Mild-mannered raps, layered over jazz with samples from Art Blakey, Donald Byrd, Bobby Hutcherson, etc., plus some new jazz by Steve Williamson. Judging from the back liner it looks like a venture capital investment by Blue Note. Flows OK, but doesn't register very strongly. [5]

Vienna Art Orchestra

Vienna Art Orchestra: *Concerto Piccolo* (1980, Hat Art) Easily the most interesting big band to emerge since Sun Ra. When it all works, they're perversely amazing, and when it doesn't, they're perversely weird. But meditation on Mingus kicks out, but the piccolo thing and the circus music have to make you wonder. An auspicious debut, although not a particularly listenable one. [5]

Vienna Art Orchestra: *The Minimalism of Erik Satie* (1983-84, Hat Art) A series of short Satie pieces, each with longer reflections drawing out a sensibility that was at least as protojazz as Joplin. The voicings come from the horns -- the whole thing has a brassiness that you've never heard with Satie before. [9]

Vienna Art Orchestra: *A Notion in Perpetual Motion* (1985, Hat Art) A huge smorgasbord, variegated, long, recorded live (as the extraneous applause reminds you) but astonishingly clear, brilliant in snatches, pretty much your average garden-variety Vienna Art Orchestra album. [+]

Weather Report

Weather Report (1971, Columbia/Legacy -92) First record by erstwhile jazz supergroup (Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter, Mirroslav Vitous, Airto Moreira, Alfonse Mouzon). Zawinul dominates over Shorter, who does near-nothing here regardless of how much he plays. Vitous is second banana. Two percussionists and no beat? Well, not quite, but close: most of the record is taken up by noodling. Despite all which, a couple of things here have some potential interest. [5]

Weather Report: *Heavy Weather* (1977, Columbia) The title seems so inevitable you wonder it took them eight albums to get to it, and why they slapped it on such a lightweight piece of plastic. [4]

World Saxophone Quartet

World Saxophone Quartet: *Point of No Return* (1977, Moers) Early on, a live performance from Festival Moers. One's tempted to ask whether it's so early they haven't learned to play yet, but most certainly they were just being nasty, as they were wont to do. And the nastiness is actually the most becoming thing about them. [5]

World Saxophone Quartet: *Moving Right Along* (1993, Soul Note) Eric Person takes over for the departed Julius Hemphill, the mastermind for better and worse of this group. Plus James Spaulding shows up for two tracks. I've always had problems with this group -- both the tone and their tendency to scratch -- but this one redeems itself less than most. [4]

Ye Ren

See Gary Hassay.

Various Artists

American Primitive Vol. II: Pre-War Revenants (1897-1939) (1897-1939, Revenant -2CD -05) The late John Fahey's label pursues primitivism for its own sake, generalizing the misfit's rather dubious rule that if something's obscure it might be interesting. They brag that the names collected here -- Geeshie Wiley, Elvie Thomas, Nugrape Twins, Homer Quincy Smith, Blues Birdhead -- are "too obscure even for Harry Smith." It's more true that Smith, and Allen Lowe in his even more catholic *American Pop*, had the whole field open and no qualms about fame one way or another, so they helped themselves to recognized classics, and established a few little-knowns along the way. Dean Blackwood, by digging deeper here, performs a useful service in recovering this lost history -- despite the title dates, only one minstrel song is older than 1926, but the sonic challenges are no less for that. But one reason it holds together better than you'd expect is that while the names are obscure the melodies have much in common with songs you've heard from Smith and Lowe. Maybe these unknowns weren't such misfits after all. [9]

Barrelhouse Mamas (1924-33, Yazoo -99) Another Yazoo concept: piano-backed female blues. Tends

to be slower than you'd expect from the title. Mixed bag as usual: one I like is Margaret Whitmire, "'Tain't a Cow in Texas"; another is Leola Manning, "Satan Is Busy in Knoxville." [5]

The Birth of a Dream: Capitol's Early Hits (1942-49, Capitol -92) Released on the 50th anniversary of Capitol Records' founding, this gives us an interesting baseline for one of America's most important labels during the 1950's. First hit: "Cow Cow Boogie" by Ella Mae Morse. Second: Paul Whiteman's "I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo." Third: Tex Ritter's "Jingle Jangle Jingle." The big band records move on to Benny Goodman and Stan Kenton. The c&w includes Jack Guthrie ("Oklahoma Hills"), Merle Travis, Tex Williams, Jimmy Wakely and Tennessee Ernie Ford. Johnny Mercer comes in with "G.I. Jive" and is good for three cuts here. Other pop singers include Jo Stafford, Betty Hutton, Peggy Lee, Mel Torme, and most importantly Nat King Cole, who appears to be the only black performer here. (Oops, Paul Whiteman's singer on "Trav'lin' Light" is unmistakably Billie Holiday.) Some classic stuff here, but mostly a label indulgence. [+]

The Birth of the Third Stream (1956-57, Columbia/Legacy -96) One thing I recall from the 1950s (or early 1960s) was being taught that classical music was the real, serious, artful stuff, and all other musics were somehow inferior. By then jazz was all those things, and becoming unpopular to boot, so various folks started thinking about how to hoist jazz into the pantheon. Duke Ellington, for instance, started writing suites, and even arranging some classical pieces for jazz orchestra. Stan Kenton affected a kind of modernism inspired by Stravinsky (even if critics were more likely to compare it to Wagner). John Lewis (Modern Jazz Quartet) invented a form of chamber jazz. In those times, Gunther Schuller, a certified classical music scholar, thought about coming up with a classical-jazz fusion he called Third Stream, and he organized the Jazz and Classical Music Society to record some. This collects two LPs: *Music for Brass* and *Modern Jazz Concert*, with pieces by John Lewis, J.J. Johnson, George Russell, Charles Mingus, Jimmy Giuffre, and Schuller himself, played by large brass bands -- no strings, not sure if the roster includes classicists (the bassoon and French horns are most suspect) but I recognize a who's who of jazz royalty, including Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Art Farmer, Hal McCusick, Jimmy Knepper, Milt Hinton, and Osie Johnson. Strikes me as a bit heavy-handed, ponderous even, especially on Schuller's pieces. On the other hand, Mingus steals the show by sounding like Mingus, there are occasional bits of wonder (like the Davis solos), and a lot of history in the booklet. [8]

Breaking Out of New Orleans (1922-29, JSP -4CD -05) JSP's Louis Armstrong (*Hot Fives & Sevens*) and Jelly Roll Morton boxes have long set the standard for skilled restoration of vintage sound, plus they're much cheaper than competing boxes on Columbia/Legacy and RCA Bluebird. Armstrong and Morton are the most famed jazz musicians to emerge from the Crescent City crucible, but there were many others, so you can view this box as some sort of mop-up operation. Freddie Keppard, for instance, was the most famous trumpet star of the pre-Armstrong era, but barely made it on record. Kid Ory hung on into the post-WWII era when he was recognized as a leader in the trad jazz revival. Fate Marable, Papa Celestin, Sam Morgan, Louis Dumaine, Armand Piron, and others led local bands of note. They're all here, along with much more critical history. [9]

California Concert: The Hollywood Palladium (1971, CTI/Masterworks Jazz 2CD -10) The label's showcase group, sort of the jazz equivalent of a package show, one where the individual stars play with each other (mostly), with a few concessions to economic reality -- e.g., not cost-effective to truck around Don Sebesky or his strings and winds; they do at least have a cohesive group sound, tied at the bottom with Ron Carter's bass, Billy Cobham's drums, Airto Moreira's percussion, and especially George Benson's streamlined guitar groove; Johnny Hammond plays organ and electric piano, Hank

Crawford slips in some alto sax, but the headliners are Freddie Hubbard on trumpet and Stanley Turrentine on tenor sax, both more than capable of warming up a crowd; with three cuts that eluded previous 2-LP and 1-CD reissues. [7]

The Complete Norman Granz Jam Sessions (1952-54, Verve -5CD -04) These jam sessions were like NBA all-star games: there's too much talent to coach or coordinate, so just turn the stars loose and let them show off. The sessions were released on LPs, imposing a fifteen-minute-per-side regime, and each piece -- a few standards, often strung together as medleys, plus staples like "Jam Blues" and "Funky Blues" -- was stretched with solos. The most famous jam sequenced solos by the three most famous alto saxophonists of the era: Johnny Hodges, Charlie Parker, and Benny Carter. A typical trumpet lineup was Roy Eldridge and Dizzy Gillespie. A tenor sax lineup was Illinois Jacquet, Flip Phillips, and Ben Webster, although Stan Getz and Wardell Gray get their licks in on the second disc. The pianist, of course, was Granz stalwart Oscar Peterson -- except when Count Basie and/or Arnold Ross sat in. The only surprise here is forgotten bebop clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, who steals the second disc and much of the last two. [9]

The Complete Stanley Dance Felsted "Mainstream Jazz" Recordings 1958-1959 (1958-59 Fresh Sound -9CD -12) An important jazz critic, Dance was born in England in 1910, moved to the US in 1937. In the late 1950s he coined the term "mainstream jazz" to describe swing musicians surviving in the post-bebop world. He dabbled on the production side, and in 1958-59 brought some of his favorites into the studio to record for the British label Felsted. This looks to be a box of nine LP-replicas, no extra takes or related trivia, but remastered sound plus a 44-page booklet including revised liner notes written by Dance in the 1970s. Dance's favorite ploy was to change the bands from one LP side to the next -- how much like a critic of the day to focus on the coherence of sides. Notes on the individual albums follow. [8]

Billy Crystal Presents: *The Milt Gabler Story* (1938-64, Verve -05) Gabler was Crystal's uncle, but he's better known as the founder of Commodore Records, the producer of Billie Holiday's anti-lynching lament "Strange Fruit," and his long hit-making tenure at Decca. At Commodore he specialized in hot jazz, only lightly sampled here in tracks by Eddie Condon and Wild Bill Davison. Commodore was a small independent, but at Decca he worked with stars like Bing Crosby, the Andrews Sisters, Louis Jordan and Louis Armstrong, while cultivating Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald and launching twokey songs that paved the way for rock and roll: Lionel Hampton's (aka Illinois Jacquet's) "Flying Home" and Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock." With so much to choose from, Crystal selected a rich and wildly disparate schmeer of mostly '50s pazz and jop. Irresistible: "The Glow Worm"; marvelous: "Little Things Mean a Lot"; de trop: "Three Coins in the Fountain"; perfect closer snuck in on a technicality, Nat King Cole's "L-O-V-E." [10]

Dope & Glory: Reefer Songs der 30er & 40er Jahre (1925-47, Trikont -2CD -02) Marijuana was legal in the U.S. until 1937, and efforts to stamp out its use -- the U.S. currently busts some 750,000 citizens a year -- don't seem to do much more than drive up the price and tempt the poor with cheaper, riskier drugs. Even if musicians indulged no more than the population at large, there would be scads of reefer songs, and of course there are: ranging from Frankie Jaxon (two of the best cuts here) in the '20s up through Nelly and NERD. Thematic compilations surface every now and then, but this one is one of the richest, not so much for its theme as for its history of jive. Long before Peter Tosh offered to advertise it, there was Cab Calloway, Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong. Most are less than explicit (my own take on spinach isn't far from Julia Lee's "Spinach Song"), and Armstrong's "Muggles" and Don Redman's

"Chant of the Weed" are just instrumentals, guilty only by implication. With stuff this clever, you don't even have to take to get a giggle. [9]

Flying Funk: Ultra Heavy Funk and Rare Grooves From Flying Dutchman, Bluebird and RCA (1968-75, Bluebird -03) One of two comps of pieces originally on the Flying Dutchman label, but this one is padded with other RCA catalog material, including two fast and loose tracks by Nina Simone. Funky organs, soul jazz, a relatively musical Gil Scott-Heron, odds and ends. [+]

Flying Groove: Rare Grooves and Jazz Classics From Bluebird and Flying Dutchman (1963-75, Bluebird -03) More oddments: this starts with the Gil Evans Orchestra playing Jimi Hendrix ("Crosstown Traffic"), with a roomfull of top-rate musicians -- Hannibal Peterson, Billy Harper, Bruce Ditmas, John Abercrombie, Howard Johnson -- I guess it's Hannibal doing the vocal. Harold Alexander's "Mama Soul" is agreeably grooveful, and Esther Marrow's "Walk Tall" is a decent soul shot. Diedre Wilson has a very satisfying vocal tack on "I Can't Keep From Crying Sometimes." This keeps going, rather improbably through a string of artists as untrustworthy as Lambert Hendricks & Bavan, Wild Bill Davis, Tom Scott, Gil Scott-Heron ("The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," an obvious one), then two Oliver Nelson cuts -- one with Count Basie -- before it overreaches with David Axelrod's "Messiah (Overture)" -- like the Hendrix, another big jazz band tackles unlikely material, but this time without the flair of Gil Evans. Gato Barbieri's "El Pampero" makes up much of the lost ground. [9]

Happy Birthday Newport! 50 Swinging Years (1955-76, Columbia/Legacy -3CD -04) Duke Ellington was born again at Newport in 1956. Johnny Hodges had just returned to the fold, but it was Paul Gonsalves who rocked the house with one of the most famous solos in jazz history. "Diminuendo in Blue" is the centerpiece of the first disc here, and arguably the one key performance that put George Wein's Newport Jazz Festival on the map. But you can (and should) go to the Ellington section of your favorite record vendor for that story, now available in two glorious CDs. The festival has hung on now for fifty years, much of it mere inertia from its heyday in the late '50s. This box is welcome, but marginal. Newport's recording legacy is spotty, and this selection limits itself to eight years (1955-58, 1960, 1963, 1973, 1976). Aside from Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" and Hancock's "Maiden Voyage," and sidetracks by Muddy Waters and Mahalia Jackson, this is a nice, loose snapshot of the jazz legends of '50s. The booklet provides some of Wein's reminiscences, but little history. [+]

Hillbilly Boogie (1939-51, Proper -4CD -02) Boogie wasn't a style so much as a meme. Rooted in the piano blues of players like Pinetop Smith and Cow Cow Davenport, boogie woogie achieved a sort of apotheosis around 1940 in the virtuoso pianistics of players like Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis, but when western swing bands started picking from the boogie woogie songbook, they found something rather different: light-hearted dance music. Boogie was a fad across country music in the late '40s, but how big a fad wasn't clear until this budget box set appeared: 4+ hours, 80+ artists, 100 songs, not just stylistically consistent but every title features the word, from "Travelling Boogie" to "I'm Too Old to Boogie Anymore." The meme enlivened minor artists like Arthur Smith and Zeb Turner, and amused major ones like Hank Snow and Merle Travis, but even as it was invented it was being buried by the new seriousness of honky tonk. This budget box brings it all back, and the excess just adds to its charm. [10]

Hot Jazz on Blue Note (1940-55, Blue Note -4CD -96) Although Blue Note is best known for their hard bop and post-bop records from roughly 1955 to 1965, Alfred Lion started the label because of his

devotion to traditional jazz. This collects an extensive set of such recordings, almost a third featuring Sidney Bechet, and well over half with Art Hodes on piano. Other veterans make appearances, including George Lewis, Edmond Hall, Baby Dodds, and James P. Johnson. And while these cuts are mixed up, the overall listening experience is remarkably uniform. Not sure anyone needs this much, but I wouldn't begin to know where to start cutting. [9]

Hot Women: Women Singers From the Torrid Regions (1927-50, Kein & Aber -03) Cajun, Cuban, Mexican, Brazilian, French Caribbean, Chilean, Spanish, Sicilian, Greek, Algerian, Tunisian, Turkish, African, Malagasy, Hindustani, Burmese, Vietnamese, Hawaiian, Tahitian -- all culled from old (and old-sounding) 78s, mostly from the '30s; all feature women singers, the "hot" determined mostly by R. Crumb's libido (your mileage may vary). The order sweeps the globe from new world to old and across the Pacific, not quite sorted by latitude, but close. Effectively, it moves from the relatively familiar to the relatively exotic. I don't love it all, but the more I play it the more cogent it sounds, slowly dragging you into odd meters and shrill harmonies -- the stuff that makes southeast Asian music so inaccessible. This at least is a framework to show you much of the world -- the old, pre-globalized world -- without it wearing out its welcome. [9]

Jazz in Paris: Champs Elysees 1917-1949 (1927-75, Gitanes/Universal -3CD -05) First disc straddles cabaret and jazz, with Jean Cocteau, Josephine Baker, Benny Carter and Don Byas as highlights; two more discs move into the bebop era with occasional retro glances, and René Thomas supplanting Django Reinhardt; the early stuff most interesting, the picture of Duke Ellington admiring the brothers Reinhardt priceless. [+]

Jazz in Paris: Montmartre 1924-1939 (1933-62, Gitanes/Universal -3CD -05) The golden age starts with five cuts from Louis Armstrong, poorly recorded but unmistakable, then works through little known players like Danny Polo; the second disc is the most concentrated set of Reinhardt and Grappelli in all the boxes, and possibly the finest single disc; the third is post-WWII, mostly local, including some players I'd like to hear more from, like Alix Combelle and André Ekyan. [+]

Jazz in Paris: Rive Gauche, Rive Droite 1956-1959 (1955-73, Verve -3CD -05) Here Paris re-centers on left bank bohemia, the jazz focus from prewar Cocteau to postwar Boris Vian; most prominent are the jazz soundtracks to films like *À bout de souffle*, *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*, *Un témoin dans la ville*, *Les liaisons dangereuses*, with Barney Wilen emerging as a major voice. [+]

Jazz in Paris: Saint-Germain-Des-Prés 1946-1956 (1947-56, Verve -3CD -05) The best organized of the boxes, with one disc of "Moldy Figs" (featuring Sidney Bechet), one of "Sour Grapes" (modernists in low spirits, including Clifford Brown and Chet Baker), and one disc with elements of both; tight chronology and careful attention to flow elevate all three discs, with the sour grape natives providing most of the surprises; Hubert Fol is one who merits further research. [9]

Jazz Satellites, Vol. 1: Electrification (1968-96, Virgin -2CD) I tracked down about half the dates here, with most dating from 1968-73. Most of the rest (by names like Divine Styler, Fat, UI, Bedouin Ascent, 16-17, Slab) are likely to be remixes. So this is some sort of post-fusion beat down. It don't make much sense to me, and I'm not sure that I like it, like at all. But it's not without interest, and it was plenty hard to find. Could be better documented. [5]

Kansas City Hot Jazz [Robert Parker's Jazz Classics in Digital Stereo] (1926-30, ABC -90) Early, the formative years of Kansas City's reputation as the home of the territory bands, the 18 cuts mostly divided between Bennie Moten (11 cuts) and Andy Kirk (4), with Walter Page, Hattie North, and

George E. Lee garnering one cut each -- Count Basie appears only on the last of the Moten cuts; transitional, not as hot as other contemporaries, not quite ready to swing -- Basie changed that, but he becomes a much larger figure in Moten's 1931-32 band. [7]

The Mixed Media Series: Basquiat Salutes Jazz (1948-74, Prestige -05) A Concord publicist called me up shortly after this dropped to get my reaction -- seems like they're envisioning a series of painter-themed jazz comps. Conceptually I think it's a crock, but I rather admire their dilligence, and respect their desperation, in trying to come up with new ways to market old jazz. My painter literacy pretty much ends around 1970. The only reason I've heard of Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-88) is because he was the subject of a movie -- which I haven't seen, so I appreciate the lavish artwork and packaging all the more. He strikes me as a cross between Robert Rauschenberg's structure and Larry Rivers' color, but I suspect the artwork shows here is selected largely based on his jazz references. No real surprise when painters are found to be jazz fans. When Basquiat died of heroin overdose -- what Greil Marcus has called "the common cold of rock death" -- he left behind some three thousand "mostly jazz" LPs. It's possible that Concord's mapping of Basquiat's collection to Fantasy's catalog distorts the painter's interests, but the curious thing about the mapping is that every song save one dates back before Basquiat outgrew diapers. (The exception isn't: it's a 1974 Dizzy Gillespie recording of "Be Bop," the song that gave the music its name. The reason, of course, is that Fantasy didn't own an earlier version.) In other words, once you get past the packaging, what you get is a typical bebop comp. And while there's some pretty classic stuff here -- a 1950 Sonny Stitt "Cherokee," a marvelous Monk "Round Midnight," vintage Fats Navarro -- there's also things you can nitpick -- an inferior live Mingus "Haitian Fight Song," live Bird including a slice from that horrid St. Nick's bootleg. Part of the problem here is that Fantasy's bebop catalog isn't all that classic -- especially regarding Parker and Gillespie. On the other hand, tying Basquiat to Bird strikes me as necrophilia. Maybe it was true, but after Bird died most of the other famous junkies cleaned up and went on to notable careers -- Miles, Coltrane, Rollins, McLean, Getz, eventually even Art Pepper (sort of). If Basquiat was locked into that culture, it doesn't seem like much to celebrate. Ornette Coleman could have saved his pitiful life. [7]

New Thing! (1956-84, Soul Jazz -2CD -05) "New Thing" is a phrase immortalized in a 1965 album title by John Coltrane and Archie Shepp. For me, it's always signified a style of saxophone playing meant to peel paint and raise the rafters, an evolution of r&b honk amplified into massive dissonance. The style's godfather was Albert Ayler, and it's current masters include Charles Gayle and David S. Ware, but it's just one thread in the much broader domain of the avant-garde (another phrase Coltrane latched onto for a 1960 album title with Don Cherry). But compiler Stuart Baker takes "new thing" in a different direction, following Shepp into what I'm tempted to call "social music" -- church roots, black power, proto-funk, cosmic groove. But there's far less emphasis on the words than in recent years' black power compilations, and a lot more spaciness. Most songs date from the early '70s, with Sun Ra way ahead of his time in '56 and a couple of throwbacks from the '80s. More interesting to connoisseurs of rare funk than of avant jazz. Could use a little more skronk, I'd say. [+]

New York for Lovers (1953-95, Verve -05) Still stuck in ballad mode, but with instrumentals, including four tenor sax giants, sandwiched between the vocals. New York titles (Manhattan, Bronx, Harlem) and lyrics ("Lonely Town") hold a slight majority, but while there's a "Chelsea" and a "Bridge," Ben Webster's "Chelsea Bridge" is a ringer. [5]

Paris for Lovers (1950-92, Verve -05) Organizing principle is that either the song title mentions Paris or at least is in French. Extra points if the song is dead-ass slow. And eight of eleven have vocals, six or

seven in French (depending on how you count Louis Armstrong murdering "La vie en rose"). Obvious is no problem -- how many times has Verve put Nina Simone's "Ne me quitte pas" on a compilation? It's not even a love song, and they still picked it. For that matter, what's so romantic about "Les feuilles mortes"? And how long did it take them to scrounge through the catalog to find Stéphane Grappelli doing "Nuages"? Or Ella and Louis doing "April in Paris"? Or French titles by Blossom Dearie, Helen Merrill, and Abbey Lincoln? Why do they think that slow songs are romantic? Even when the lead is on flute? [4]

The Prestige Legacy, Vol. 1: The High Priests (1951-58, Prestige -00) Prestige cut albums fast and cheap, which suited some musicians and not others -- of the four "high priests" sampled here, one (John Coltrane) got much better as soon as he left, two (Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis) started releasing more ambitious albums (*Brilliant Corners* and *Kind of Blue*), leaving only Sonny Rollins, who may have peaked with *Saxophone Colossus* but hardly stopped there; some prime stuff here, but the artists are worth exploring separately (if not necessarily on Prestige). [6]

The Prestige Legacy, Vol. 2: Battle of the Saxes (1949-64, Prestige -00) While not everything here reduces to cutting contests, this is the sort of thing Prestige thrived on: throw two saxophonists into the ring and let them bang it out, like Wardell Gray and Sonny Criss, or Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, or Lockjaw Davis and Johnny Griffin, or Oliver Nelson and Eric Dolphy, or Sonny Stitt and damn near everyone, or bump it up to four for the swing-heavy *Very Saxy* (Coleman Hawkins) or five for the slinky *Brothers* (Stan Getz-Zoot Sims). [9]

Progressions: 100 Years of Jazz Guitar (1906-2001, Columbia/Legacy -4CD -05) Guitar has always had a problematic place in jazz. It's been present since the beginning, but hasn't had a consistent role or focus like other instruments. In part this is because technology has transformed the sound of guitar more than any other instrument -- electric amplification, effects devices. But it's also because most guitar developments took place outside of jazz, so jazz guitarists often import musical ideas along with the technology. The idea behind this box is to cover it all, but that's a tough job, especially as one gets into the home stretch. In the early days guitar was almost exclusively a rhythm instrument -- so much so that Eddie Condon and Freddie Green were famous for was never taking solos. The improvisers were more likely to come from elsewhere -- the first disc here widens the net to pick up bluesmen Lonnie Johnson and Casey Bill Weldon, western swingers Leon McAulliffe and Eldon Shamblin, and notables from the far ends of the earth: Sol Hoppai (Hawaii), Oscar Alemán (Argentina), and Django Reinhardt (France). Charlie Christian might have changed everything, but he died in 1942, and his legacy -- bebop-inflected lines cleanly picked on electric guitar -- developed gradually through the '50s, culminating in Wes Montgomery. The second disc here covers this period rather loosely, including Les Paul and Chet Atkins as well as the usual suspects. While the first two discs make for interesting archaeology, the subject gets messier for the other two, and the chronology breaks down. The third disc introduces fusion, again starting with a notable outsider, Jimi Hendrix, followed by John McLaughlin. The fourth disc recasts fusion into smoother groove music, with examples including Eric Gale and Larry Carlton. But neither disc focuses at all tightly. The third includes tastes as varied as George Benson, Sonny Sharrock, Derek Bailey, John Abercrombie, and Ralph Towner, while the fourth has James Ulmer, Bill Frisell, John Scofield and Marc Ribot. So this covers a lot of ground. It's tempting to add that it also misses much, but that's mostly because the raw numbers and stylistic variety of jazz guitarists have exploded in the last twenty years, and it's too soon to figure out what that means. A box of any other instrument would have similar problems, but guitar much more so. All this jumping around

limits the box's listenability, especially on Disc 4. But then the box is best viewed as a reference set, and the 144-page booklet is by far the best thing here. [8]

Sentimental Journey: Pop Vocal Classics, Vol. 1 (1942-1946) (1942-46, Rhino -93) This series of four discs, bracketed by years up to 1959, is documented by Will Friedwald. It provides a useful survey of American pop music in the uncertain period between jazz and rock. Pop singers came to dominate the big jazz bands of the late '30s, to the point that they increasingly displaced the bandleaders as stars. This first volume has the unenviable task of sorting out the new pop style from its jazz matrix, but its operating principle seems to be separation: nothing here is likely to ever be called jazz. This also pays a price in segregation: even though four of the singers (counting the Mills Brothers as one) are black, they are mostly colorless and relatively undistinguished. A better period comp is possible, as is a more interesting conceptual comp. [5]

Songs That Got Us Through WWII (1941-45, Rhino -90): This was the first serious attempt at a WWII-themed pop compilation; it differs from the Burns comps first of all in having songs that actually refer to the war -- "G.I. Jive" and "Comin' in on a Wing and a Prayer" most explicitly, but most are hard to conceive of otherwise, including the one prewar song, "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy"; still, in some ways they're trying too hard to be proper. [+]

Songs That Got Us Through WWII Vol. 2 (1942-45, Rhino -94) This is where they throw caution to the wind, featuring more blacks -- like Louis Jordan, Duke Ellington, Buddy Johnson, Billie Holiday, Lionel Hampton -- and weirder whites, ranging from Roy Rogers to Marlene Dietrich to the Pied Pipers and their "Mairzy Doats" and Bing Crosby camping up a Louis Jordan song; every song charted, although "Lili Marlene" not until after the war ended. [9]

The Sound of Jazz (1957, Columbia/Legacy -00) This was originally the soundtrack to a TV show, part of a series called "The Seven Lively Arts." It tries to cover too much ground, but that only means that it could have been much longer without losing a drop of interest. Nine tracks, six or seven lineups, many configured as "all star" groups with shared musicians. There are two vocal tracks, showcases for Billie Holiday and Jimmy Rushing. Henry "Red" Allen leads a trad jazz band that includes Rex Stewart, Vic Dickenson, Pee Wee Russell, Coleman Hawkins, Nat Pierce, and Jo Jones. Count Basie swings with a group including Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Harry Carney, Roy Eldridge, Dickenson, Jones, and Freddie Green, with Rushing on one cut. Holiday is backed by Mal Waldron and three saxes: Young, Hawkins, and Ben Webster. More modern jazz is provided by Jimmy Giuffre's trio, with Jim Hall on guitar, and by Waldron, playing solo. The remaining track is the most unclassifiable of the bunch: "Blues," with Giuffre, Russell, Jones, and Danny Barker on guitar. The pairing of Holiday and Young was the high point of the show -- I've seen that clip several times. The parts I find most fascinating are the cuts with Giuffre, since I'm not normally taken by him. Bonus alternate take of "Wild Man Blues" by Allen's group, which brings things around to a nice close. [9]

Spiritual Jazz: Esoteric, Modal and Deep Jazz From the Underground 1968-77 (1968-77, Jazzman -08) Obscure funk tracks -- the only names I recognize are Lloyd Miller, Mor Thiam, and Leon Gardner, and even those are names I rarely run into -- not sure what the unifying theme really is but they flow and feel like some sort of harmony. [7]

Stomp and Swerve: American Music Gets Hot (1897-1925, Archeophone -03) Starting from the first recordings of the music of the day -- marches, rags, folksongs, minstrelsy -- this traces the emergence of a new art form, music meant to conquer the world, and its apotheosis, "Cake Walking Babies From

Home." [9]

Swing Tanzen Verboten! Swing Music and Nazi Propaganda Swing During World War II (1933-44, Proper -4CD -03) Much of Europe fell in love with jazz during the '30s: Americans like Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Coleman Hawkins, Benny Carter, and Sidney Bechet toured Europe and were treated like royalty, in stark contrast to the racism back home. They in turn inspired European musicians, some like Sven Asmussen, Spike Hughes, and Django Reinhardt developing into notable jazz artists. But Europe also fell under the pall of the Nazis. This box explores the strange history of jazz under Nazi hegemony: one disc of mediocre German swing bands after the "non-aryan" purge; a much snazzier disc of Charlie & His Orchestra rescripting jazz standards for propaganda broadcasts ("got the blackout blues/blue as I can be" -- the non-non-aryan tunesmiths make all the difference); and two discs of West European jazz under Nazi occupation, an excuse to pad out the box with work by Asmussen and Reinhardt and lesser-knowns. The latter discs are lighter and more pleasing than the German bands, probably because they come from a period when the Nazis were preoccupied with the East, but they're unexceptional compared to the same artists pre- and post-war work. The interest here is at best historical, but in such a brutal context not only does the music pale -- the story itself seems trite. [4]

Tease! The Beat of Burlesque (1952-61, Verve -05) Ends (or should I say climaxes?) with David Rose's "The Stripper" -- you know that one, whether you realize it or not; for foreplay, compiler Joey Altruda scoured the back catalog for risqué blues -- the most respectable Charlie Parker's bland "Funky Blues," the oddest something Roland Kirk did on flute. [+]

30 #1 Hits of the '30s (1930-39, Collectors' Choice -2CD -05) More jazz than the so-called Jazz Age of the '20s, with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, and Mildred Bailey all scoring hits; more conventional pop, too. [9]

20 #1 Hits of the '20s (1920-29, Collectors' Choice -05) Recorded music goes back to the last decade of the 19th century, but as a business and a cultural phenomenon it didn't take off until the 1920s, when the symbiotic invention of radio started to reach a mass audience. The '20s, roaring or not, were a long time ago, and the primitive recording technology makes them even more inaccessible. The music we tend to remember is what's proven most useful since then -- Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Bix Beiderbecke, Duke Ellington, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Jimmie Rodgers, all pioneers of more modern styles. Restricted to #1 Pop Hits, the only performer from that list to appear here is Bessie Smith, although Ethel Waters, Al Jolson, and Paul Whiteman singer Bing Crosby aren't exactly unknowns. This judicious selection broadens out feel for the decade, without trapping us in trivia. Singers like Sophie Tucker, Eddie Cantor, and Jolson are dated, but still convey a sense of why they were held in much esteem then; many of these songs are ancient versions of recognized classics -- Marion Harris in "St. Louis Blues," Van & Schenck with "Ain't We Got Fun" and "Carolina in the Morning," Ukulele Ike "Singin' in the Rain." [9]

Uptown Lounge (1950s-70s, The Right Stuff -99) Don't have the dates on these, but clearly they go back to the '50s and don't go much beyond the '70s. The singers with a couple of exceptions (Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Dinah Washington, Esther Phillips -- none of which are given prime material) make up the rear guard of the post-WWII jazz crooner roster -- no Sinatra, no Clooney, but they would have been welcome; no Anita O'Day, no June Christy, no chance for Betty Carter. Still, this is brilliantly selected: how can a singer as bad as Sammy Davis Jr. acquit himself so well on a song as

bad (for singers, anyway) as "Lush Life"? For my money the standout track is Della Reese doing "The Lady Is a Tramp." Imagine that! No, you can't. [9]